DON RADER
TRAIL BLAZER

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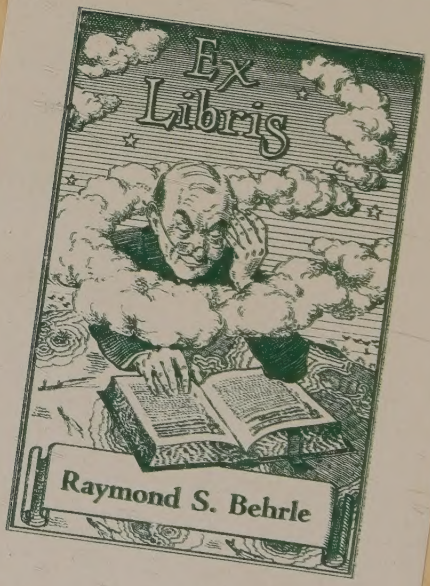
HAROLD M. SHERMAN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A FLOOD OF LIGHT STRUCK THE INTRUDING FIGURE SQUARELY IN THE FACE.

Frontispiece (*Page* 51)

DON RADER, TRAIL BLAZER

BY

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

AUTHOR OF
FLASHING STEEL
ONE MINUTE TO PLAY
BLOCK THAT KICK
HIT BY PITCHER
BASES FULL, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
PHIL SCHAEFFER

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To

CHARLES S. JONES

A Good Scout and a Good Rotarian

In Sincere Appreciation of

His Great Work with Boys

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DON RADER, TRAIL BLAZER

CHAPTER I

A SCOUT IN WRONG

"WHAT? You don't have any camp site? That's a heck of a note! Why, you ought to see the one our troop's got up in Traverse City, Michigan!"

The speaker was Donald Rader, newly become member of Troop Number 36, New York City, and he was expressing frank astonishment at the troop's lack of equipment.

"What do you guys do for fun, anyhow?" he demanded, quite sincerely.

Ozzie Brinkman, who lived in the same apartment house as his new neighbor and who had introduced Don to his buddies in the troop, showed irritation.

"Oh, we manage to have a good time now and then," he retorted, with a trace of sharpness.

But Don, unnoticing, went on. "Now and then is right! Why, you fellows don't know

what a good time is until you've had a camp of your own! And I'll bet that's half the reason why there's not more of you made first class scouts. You're having such a tough time getting next to the experience that's required. Say, that's a shame! And here I always thought a big city troop had more advantages than a small town one!"

Scoutmaster Ed Wheeler, ex-service man, studied the new member quietly. First Class Scout Donald Rader had come to Troop Number 36 bearing the highest of commendations. His Certificate of Service from his old troop revealed a record of which any scout might well have been proud and many rightfully envious. According to the report, Scout Rader had rendered valuable assistance to his scoutmaster in conducting the troop, acting as patrol leader and taking a leading part in scout community activities. More than that, he had earned twenty-one Merit badges, the number required to be an Eagle, and was prepared to make application for the highest honor in Scouting at the time of his parents' moving from the city. His old scoutmaster had therefore urged in a letter that whosoever might be his new scoutmaster should assist Scout Rader in securing the Eagle rank to which it was felt that he was entitled.

"So far he looks to me like an Eagle in name

only," Scoutmaster Wheeler observed reluctantly. "Too bad. We need just the sort of timber that Rader's credentials would make him out. But I can predict right now that lad's going to get what's coming to him!"

"What did you ever come to New York for?" fired Lump Hogan, chubbiest scout in the troop.

"New York wasn't any choice of mine," replied the new member, "But what's a fellow going to do when his folks move here? I'd sooner have stayed in Traverse."

"It might have been a good idea," remarked a voice which could not be identified.

The new member grinned, quite unoffended.

"There's a wise one," he complimented, "Just the same, fellows, you don't know what you're missing, living in a city like this . . . and not having a camp site. You need one lots more than we do for you can't just go out and pitch camp anywhere. The country's too built up. But around Traverse! Well, you could almost imagine you're right out in the wilds . . ."

"That so?" broke in Bean Rowe, "Well, what do you think of a bull moose running through the main street of Yonkers last winter?"

"What did he do, break out of the Moose lodge?" rejoined the new member, unabashed.

The expected laugh was not forthcoming. Don Rader glanced about the group surrounding him, noting facial expressions for the first time.

"Pardon me, I thought you were joking," he apologized, flushing visibly, "And I was trying to go you one better."

"This really happened," explained Bean, with painful dryness, "Old New York state's plenty wild in lots of places yet. You don't have to go clear to Michigan."

"I'll say not!" seconded Ozzie, "Remember the time we found bear tracks up at Lake Saranac?"

"Those weren't bear tracks, those were cow tracks!" kidded Lump.

"*You* didn't see 'em!" challenged Ozzie, "Squint and I were the only ones up there!"

"That's the reason I'm certain they were cow tracks," insisted Lump.

"Are you sure they weren't *railroad* tracks?" asked Sly Bacon, "Remember that one Ozzie pulled about his being sure the train had just passed because it had left its tracks?"

"Ow!"

"Which reminds me," broke in the new member, "Of a time out at camp when . . ."

But the scouts were no longer paying any attention to him. Their interest, formerly cen-

tered upon the newcomer, was now suddenly dissipated. Each scout found something to talk about to the one next him and the fellow from Traverse City, Michigan made the disquieting discovery that he was practically talking to himself. The only thing to do, of course, under such circumstances, was to cut it short and to act as unconcerned as possible. Don wandered from the bunch on the pretense of more closely inspecting the highschool gymnasium which the scouts were using for their meetings.

"Fine place you've got here," he remarked to Scoutmaster Wheeler, with well meant praise, "Our troop meets in the church gym. But it's not one-two with this! At that they say our gym's the best in Northern Michigan!"

"You have a lot of wonderful things in Michigan, haven't you?" inquired the Scoutmaster, guilelessly.

"You bet!" responded the new member, with enthusiasm, "Michigan's a great state! She's worth raving about!"

"In that case," replied Scoutmaster Wheeler, with quiet pointedness, "I should think Michigan could pretty well speak for herself!"

There was not the slightest bite in the Scoutmaster's voice, yet Don Rader felt the teeth-marks of his reply. Color mounted in his cheeks as the realization came to him that he somehow

had rubbed the wool of his new associates the wrong way. Just what he had said or done to deserve such reproof from Scoutmaser Wheeler was beyond Don. In that wretched moment he knew only that the Scoutmaster's gentle reprimand had drawn silent applause from all members of the troop. And, slowly, a resentment began to smoulder.

"What's the idea?" wondered Don, "This some sort of initiation? Kind of queer way to treat a guy his first meeting!"

But the sudden atmosphere of coolness could not be explained and neither did it abate. Don, feeling miserably out of place, tried desperately to cover up, to enter back into the conversation and to chum up to the fellows, but his efforts only served to emphasize the unfortunate situation.

"Aw, dry up on Michigan, won't you?" was the retort he had thrown at him finally. And this came as near as anything to giving the new member a clue as to his developed unpopularity.

It was nearing ten o'clock, the closing hour, and Ozzie Brinkman, senior patrol leader, blew his whistle.

"Troop fall in!" he commanded, and the scouts quickly lined up in order, "Right dress! . . . Front!"

With the troop in formation, Ozzie saluted

Scoutmaster Wheeler who returned the salute and stepped forward to take charge.

"At ease!" he commanded, "I've several announcements to make. First, that overnight hike we're to take this Friday. All you candidates for a second class badge had better be on hand. We're leaving the school corner at four-fifteen sharp and we've a new place at the foot of the Palisades that you're going to go crazy over! Anyone who's late reporting is just going to be out of luck, that's all. And now for a pleasant surprise. Next Monday, June thirteenth, has been declared a holiday. Can any of you guess why?"

Grins came over faces, followed by an instantaneous outburst.

"LINDBERGH!"

"Right!" smiled the Scoutmaster, "And Troop 36 is to report for duty at ten o'clock that morning. We're to help keep order along the line of march. Our troop's been assigned to the block of Fifth Avenue between forty-fifth and forty-sixth streets."

"Whoopee!"

"Gee, that's great!"

"Oh, boy—we'll see Lindy!"

"If we're not kept too busy holding back the crowds," warned Scoutmaster Wheeler, "It's only fair to tell you fellows now that city au-

thorities are calling out all reserves in anticipation of the biggest throng in New York's history. And grave fears are being entertained as to whether the thousands on thousands can be held in check. From the reception Lindy got abroad, it's likely, when he reaches his home country, that the welcome will exceed all bounds. So our task is going to be far from an easy one!"

"Scout Rowe!"

"Sir?"

"What time is the parade to be?"

"Present plans call for Lindbergh's arrival at the Mall in Central Park at two o'clock where he is to be decorated with the New York State Medal of Valor by Governor Smith," informed the Scoutmaster, "But it's expected that the crowd will start gathering early along the line of march. We're to be at our post of duty at eleven."

The scouts glanced at one another, pleased and thrilled at the prospect.

"All right," continued Scoutmaster Wheeler, "Anyone have any new candidates to propose or questions or complaints?"

"Yes, sir! I have, sir!"

"Scout Hogan! . . . What's the trouble now?"

"My badge, sir! I've lost it!"

"*Again?* What's the matter with you, Lump? This is the fourth time in six weeks!"

"I know it, sir," responded Lump, sheepishly.

"How long ago did you miss it?"

"Oh, about two minutes."

"Two minutes? You mean to tell me you hunted that long and were unable to discover it?"

The chunkiest scout in the troop grinned, revealing a double chin.

"Well, I thought I'd better report it right away," he rejoined, "I never was any good at finding things."

"Have you looked in your pockets?" asked the Scoutmaster.

Lump shook his head and patted his pockets for assurance. Of a sudden his eyes bulged and a hand shoved down into a pocket depth, coming out with the lost pin.

A howl of laughter went up. Lump stood, staring at the pin dazedly.

"Now how did that get there?" he wanted to know, and scratched his head, frowning the while. "Oh, I remember now! I took the pin off and put it in my pocket when we were playing leap frog so's I wouldn't lose it. My mistake!"

"Well, see that it doesn't happen again,"

smiled Scoutmaster Wheeler, "Scouts, attenshun!"

Heels clicked and spines stiffened. Smiles vanished from faces. Eyes looked alertly frontward. A moment of reverential silence followed. Then came the order.

"Repeat the Scout Oath and Law!"

And, at once, evenly, clearly, the voice of each troop member blended into a greater voice, "On my honor I will do my best . . ." continuing on unfalteringly to the finish.

"Troop dismissed!"

Ranks broke speedily after that and everyone prepared to go his way. Don Rader, suddenly remembering something, followed Scoutmaster Wheeler to the door.

"Say, Mr. Wheeler . . ."

"Yes, Rader?"

"I'd like to ask you . . . Scoutmaster Oakes told me to take the matter up with you. It's about applying for my Eagle badge."

There was just a trace of backwardness in the new member's approach. He looked about him apprehensively as if sensitive that other scouts might be within hearing.

"Your Eagle badge?" repeated Scoutmaster Wheeler, and Don had the unpleasant feeling that his new Scoutmaster was looking straight through him.

"Yes, sir," answered Don, with not quite so much assurance, "Didn't Scoutmaster Oakes send you my record? I was counting on making application before I left."

"I have your record," said Scoutmaster Wheeler, slowly, "I guess you're all right, Rader, but we won't make anything out tonight. You see me in about a month from now." With this the Scoutmaster turned to see if the gym had been emptied. "Snap it up, you fellows!" he called, "Lights out, Bean!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied Scout Rowe as the gym went dark.

And a moment later all scouts were out on the sidewalk bidding each other "good night".

The school was located at Fort Washington Avenue and One Hundred and Seventy-fourth Street. Don, living at 740 West 172nd Street, had, therefore, three blocks to walk. And they were to be three dismal blocks this evening.

"I've gotten in bad over something," Don told himself, glumly, "That much is certain or Scoutmaster Wheeler wouldn't have put me off for a month on applying for my Eagle badge. I'd better ask Ozzie to give me the straight on it."

Scout Lump Hogan lived in the apartment house across the street from number Seven-forty and he always accompanied Ozzie home.

Was it imaginary or did Lump and Ozzie actually seem to resent his joining them? At any rate he didn't want to say anything to Ozzie about this personal matter in Lump's presence. Ozzie was the first fellow he'd met on coming to New York and Don quite naturally felt that he knew Ozzie best. He had attended the meeting with Ozzie, eager to get back into scouting again. The finest fellows in the world were scouts. At least the finest fellows he knew were. And it would take a bunch of fine fellows to replace those he had left in Traverse. That was what hurt. Just as he had begun to feel that he had at last found them, they had turned on him.

"And I can't figure out what they had a license to get sore about," Don pondered, "They apparently didn't like my telling them about my old troop. But, gee whiz! If a scout came to our troop from another part of the country, I'd want to hear all about his troop first off! A fellow gets a lot of great ideas by trading experiences!"

Don, walking along beside Ozzie and Lump, felt himself to be out of the conversation. He fell a pace behind them, as a consequence, that he might not appear too interested in what they were saying. But the subject the two scout buddies were discussing was nothing personal. It

was a subject which, ever since the eventful morning of May 20th, had set the world aflame.

"Lindy's due back this coming Friday night," declared Lump, "And Washington gets to see him first. Oh, boy, would I like to be him!"

"You could never be Lindy," discouraged Ozzie.

"Why not?"

"You're too fat."

"Oh, well," grinned Lump, "If I was Lindy I couldn't stand on the sidelines and watch myself go by. Think of the fun he's missing! He's got to sit in somebody's auto and bow to the right and left for miles and miles until he's rubbed the skin off his Adam's apple and is buried up to the chin in scraps of paper! Would I fly across the ocean for that? *Would I?* Well, somebody just give me an airplane?"

"We've got a great place to see the parade from," said Ozzie, "Between forty-fifth and forty-sixth! We can see the procession coming for blocks. I'd lots rather be stationed there than down around the reviewing stands where there'll be such mobs that nobody'll get a real chance to see anything."

"Me, too," agreed Lump, "Well, here's where we part company. See you Saturday morning. I got to finish my Second Class tests

on that hike. Goodnight, Rader! You coming Saturday?"

"I don't know yet," replied Don, hesitantly.

"Don't know whether we can give you any scenery like Michigan but we're kind of fond of the Palisades and the old Hudson River, ourselves," answered Lump, as a parting shot.

The new member of Troop 36 turned appealingly to Ozzie who was about to run up his apartment house steps.

"Wait a second, Ozzie."

"Hurry it up. I promised mother I'd be in early."

The fellow who had taken Don to the scout meeting, stood on the first step, hand grasping the railing.

"I want to know something," said the new member, directly, "I didn't mean to get the guys down on me. Will you tell me, Ozzie, what's wrong?"

"Tell you!" snapped Ozzie, "Hasn't it been made plain enough to you?"

Don shook his head.

"I must be dumb," he answered, helplessly, "But I don't exactly get it. Unless it's what I said about the troop I used to belong to."

"That's it!" spoke Ozzie, bluntly.

"But what was there to get peeved about that?" protested Don, wonderingly.

"It wasn't what you said, it was the way you said it," explained Ozzie, "Does that tell you anything?"

Don's eyes widened. "Why, I . . . let me think . . . what did I . . . ?" He bit his lips. "Thanks, Ozzie . . . I guess I begin to . . . to tumble. Gee, I didn't mean it that way, honest!"

"Maybe not," admitted Ozzie, frankly, "But you're going to have a tough time convincing the bunch that you didn't. Pretty raw stuff when you think it over . . . running down our troop's advantages by comparison . . . telling us we don't know what we're missing. How do you know but what *you've* been missing a lot by not being in our shoes? It's all according to your viewpoint. And it never sounds very well for a new man . . ."

Don winced and hung his head.

"I see it now, Ozzie. I don't blame the bunch. I'd. . . ."

A disturbance down the street suddenly distracted the two scouts' attention. Loud laughter and boisterous singing. A crowd of rather rough looking fellows approaching, pushing each other off the sidewalk, scuffling among themselves and shouting.

"For she lives down in our alley. . . . !" sang one of them.

Don looked at Ozzie, questioningly.

"There's the alley gang!" Ozzie informed, in a low voice, "That's an appropriate song they're singing . . . so far's the alley's concerned, anyway. Tough crowd. Mark Whipple, their ringleader, lives in our building, too. Have you met him?"

"Yes, I've run into him several times," nodded Don, "He lives on the same floor we do. His folks have a back apartment that faces on the court."

"Queer people," went on Ozzie, "The father works nights. Every once and awhile he comes home drunk and beats up on Mrs. Whipple. Guess that hasn't happened since you've been here, has it?"

"Why, I don't know," replied Don, uncertainly.

"You'd know all right if it had," emphasized Ozzie, "The whole apartment house knows it. Talk about noise . . . there's no one can sleep. They've had to call the police twice!"

"Who?"

"Other tenants! Nobody has to stand for that, you know."

"But why doesn't the landlord put such people out?" asked Don, an eye on the gang as it drew nearer.

"He's tried to, I guess," said Ozzie, "But he's having trouble breaking their lease. Meanwhile he's given Mr. Whipple some pretty stiff warnings. About time! Some tenants were going to move out if the racket didn't stop. They haven't kicked up a row lately."

"Well, it's not hard to understand why this Whipple fellow's like he is, then," concluded Don, "I could tell he was pretty tough but I haven't been here long enough to get to know the neighborhood and what's going on around."

"Don't worry!" assured Ozzie, "You'll find plenty. New York's got all kinds. And there's a pretty big variety just in one apartment house! Well, I've got to be beating it in. Good night!"

Ozzie started up the steps. As he did so, Mark Whipple and his gang swung across the street.

"Hey, you!" called Mark.

"Look out!" warned Ozzie, "They're out for trouble! You'd better come in with me."

The new member of Troop 36 stiffened.

"Why should I run from that bunch?" he rejoined, "I've done nothing to them and I've just as much right out here as they have!"

"You're foolish!" counseled Ozzie. "I'm going in. See you later!"

And to the accompaniment of taunting jeers, the fellow who had had the courage to tell Don Rader what was wrong with him, hurried up the steps of the apartment house and disappeared inside.

CHAPTER II

DON MEETS THE ALLEY GANG

Don Rader's father had been a great out-of-door man in his day and had chummed with his boy years before Don had reached scout age, developing his son's resourcefulness under every manner of condition. It was not, then, even instinctively in Don's nature to run from danger. His training had called for the facing of every situation, however unpleasant it might be.

"Son," Mr. Rader had told him repeatedly, "Whatever you dodge now will bob up later in life and will seem bigger every time until you meet it and put it down once and for all!"

And so, when Ozzie Brinkman left him rather than encounter those he had termed "the alley gang", Don Rader made a grim mental reservation concerning him.

"Not so good under fire," was the thought.

Don turned a smiling face toward the gang who were now almost upon him, fearful that he, too, would make a break for it.

"Hello, Boy Scout!" called one, with a deprecating glance at his uniform.

"You're the new guy up in A-sixty-three, ain't you?" gibed another.

"That's me," admitted Don, good naturedly, "What of it?"

"Why, we're glad to meet you. That's what of it!" retorted an exceptionally large, ugly-faced fellow, leeringly, "We're *darn* glad to meet you." And with that, a quick slapping movement of the hand knocked Don's hat from his head.

The new member of Troop 36 stooped to pick his hat up but it was kicked from his reach.

Don knew better than to attempt to get it. He stood on the lower step of the apartment house, eyeing the gang quietly, still smiling. A taxi pulled up to let a man and woman out. The gang stepped to one side that the couple might pass into the house which they did, bestowing curious glances on their way up the steps.

"Since when have you been a Boy Scout?" It was Mark Whipple speaking, the first time he had said anything.

"This'll be my fourth year," answered Don, evenly.

"You think it's going to get you anywhere?" razzed a voice.

"It's already gotten me somewhere," replied Don.

There were laughs at this, Whipple especially appearing much amused.

"What was the matter with your friend? That guy Brinkman? Why didn't he stick around?"

"He promised his folks he'd turn in early," explained Don.

"And scouts always obey their folks!" joshed the ugly-faced bully, "Isn't that so, mother's boy?"

"A scout should do it, if he doesn't," replied Don, unflinching.

"Applesauce!" jeered Mark, "That's not the reason Brink went in. He may have used that as an excuse. But he's scared green of us and we know it."

Don grinned, taking care that he kept his back to the building so that no one could get around behind him.

"Don't kid yourselves! Why should anyone be afraid of you?"

"Yeah?" taunted the bully, "*You're* not scared, are you? Oh, no! Look at his knees shake, gang! He'd have gotten away, too, if he could!" The bully reached over suddenly, grabbed Don's first class badge, and despite

Don's resistance, tore the badge from his chest. He backed away as the new member of Troop 36 advanced upon him, holding the badge up, mockingly. "Some decoration, eh gang! Suppose he got this for keeping his hair brushed and his finger nails clean!"

The gang retreated across the street to a high boarded area which blocked an open space between two apartment houses, Don following.

"I'll thank you for the return of that badge and my hat," he said, quietly.

"You'll thank me?" laughed the bully, "Well, won't that be nice?"

"Let's see that badge!" ordered ringleader Whipple.

The bully turned it over gloatingly.

"There you are, chief! Put her on and let's see how she looks."

The idea struck Mark as a good one and he fastened the pin on his shirt front as the gang cheered.

"Yea! How's it feel to be a sissy?" cried one.

"See here, I won't have you talking to me that way!" rebuked Mark, in girlish fashion.

The gang howled.

"Give the nice little boy his hat and let him go home," proposed the bully, "Don't you see he's about to break down and cry?"

Don, hands on hips, stood at the edge of the group, watching all members of the gang closely.

"You fellows going to give me back my things or not?"

"When we get good and ready," answered Mark, looking down with interest at the badge, "First you're going to tell us something about this funny looking medal."

Don hesitated. "All right," he accepted, warily, "What would you like to know about it?"

"What's it supposed to be?" asked the ringleader of the alley gang.

"It's a first class badge," informed Don.

"That doesn't tell me anything."

Don smiled. "I didn't think it would. And I couldn't begin to tell you all the things a guy's got to be able to do before he can get one of them."

"Got to be able to sew and cook!" volunteered someone.

"Yes, and swim fifty yards, and send and receive a message in Semaphore code, thirty words to the minute; know the principal trees and birds and animals; know how to find your way by the stars like the Indians did; know how to start a fire without matches; know how to do

first aid . . . oh, there's a bunch of stuff. Let's have the badge, Whipple. I've got to be turning in."

"Not so fast," teased Mark, "I'm not through yet. What's the three points on this badge stand for—anything?"

"Certainly! Everything stands for something. Those three points represent the three points of the Scout Oath."

"And what are they? No smoking, drinking and swearing?"

"Nope. Come on, Whipple. I've monkeyed long enough."

Don held out his hand for the badge.

"Well, what does it mean then?" demanded Mark, evasively.

"If I told you it still wouldn't mean anything," rejoined Don.

"Is that so?"

"You think we don't know anything, eh?"

"See here, you!" spoke up the bully, threateningly, "The chief asked you a question. You going to answer it or not?"

"All right," decided Don, "I'll answer it. But this is the last one. The three points of the Scout Oath are, first—to do your duty to God and your country, and to obey the Scout Law; second, to help other people at all times; third,

to keep yourself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Sunday School stuff!"

Don nodded, grimly. "I told you fellows it wouldn't mean anything to you. Now, Whipple, for the last time, the badge and hat, please!"

"Don't you give 'em to him, chief!"

"I want the hat!" sneered the bully, putting it on his head. "She's a size too small but I can wear her by stretching."

He pulled it down, with a jerking movement, so that it fit snugly. And, just as he did so, lightning struck in two places almost at once.

Don made an unexpectedly quick move, grasped ringleader Whipple by the wrist and drew from him a cry of pain as he twisted the wrist so that the fingers clutching the badge gave up their prize. Then, with a deft shove, Don sent Whipple sprawling. The over-sized bully was a step beyond and so slow-moving as to be totally unprepared for the fist which found a landing spot on the point of his jaw. As he went down he felt the scout hat torn from his head. A third member of the gang, springing to action, succeeded in springing only into another fist, and he, too, went down from a well directed blow.

From a third floor window, up over the street, an excited voice suddenly cried out.

"Atta boy, Rader! Clean 'em up! Need any help?"

Ozzie Brinkman, tardily volunteering his services!

Outnumbered, seven to one, Don knew that discretion was now the better part of valor. He was retreating, however, with everything he had gone after, so there was no sense in remaining and taking the beating which would inevitably be his by the very force of odds against him.

"We'll get you for this!" promised the gang as the new member of Troop 36 ran up the apartment house steps.

"Not if I see you first!" Don called back, laughingly.

But his face was sober as he climbed the stairs of the walk-up apartment to the door of A-63. And well it might be for in one evening he had succeeded in incurring the ill-will of both factions in the neighborhood—his fellow Scouts and the famed alley gang!

CHAPTER III

AN OVERNIGHT CAMP

Don met Ozzie in the hall the morning following his run-in with the alley gang. He greeted Ozzie a bit coldly and started on out but Ozzie detained him.

"How'd you come out last night?" Ozzie wanted to know.

"All right," replied Don, reticently.

"I was watching from the window," Ozzie explained, his face flushing, "I saw you follow the gang across the street and I was just getting ready to come down again when you made your get-away."

"Yes, I heard you holler," said Don, dryly.

"They're a tough bunch all right, aren't they?" asked Ozzie, testily.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Don, "I got the idea last night they'd like to have you think they're tougher than they are."

"Well, I didn't see any sense in giving them an excuse to start trouble," said Ozzie, "That's why I went in. And besides, as I told you, I'd promised to be in early."

"That's all right," assured Don, looking Ozzie squarely in the eye, "You don't have to apologize. I didn't mind meeting those birds alone. In fact I rather enjoyed it. We used to have a rough crowd up in Traverse."

Don checked himself. He must be careful. No more odious comparisons. He was in bad enough as it was.

"Well, I . . ." faltered Ozzie, obviously embarrassed, "I just wanted you to get me right. I didn't want you to think I'd run out on you."

"Oh, no," accepted Don, "I believed you had to turn in. Forget it, Ozzie. It's a small matter."

The member of Troop 36 looked his relief.

"Okay. I'm glad you didn't get any wrong impression. Sometimes a little thing can get magnified into a pretty big thing. Word passed around among the fellows, you understand? Especially when a guy's working toward his Eagle."

Ozzie departed, whistling.

The newcomer to New York and the ranks of Troop 36 had not had the opportunity, in his shortly more than a month's residence, to become much acquainted with the city or its environs. Don's outstanding impression, thus

far, was one of acres of buildings, human beings living like ancient cliff dwellers, nature crowded into the background by a nervously bustling mankind. The roar and jam of the subways, the rattle and rumble of the elevated trains, the sputter and mutter of the street traffic, the rat-a-tat-tat of air hammers on steel construction work, the rocking boom! of blasting operations, making new excavations for new buildings to house more cliff dwellers! Everywhere a maddening sort of activity. The vibration of it got in one's veins and left a tingling sort of feeling. Don couldn't decide whether the feeling was pleasurable or not. It was such a new sensation. To one whose observing faculties had been trained, Don's eyeful of New York had left him dazed, much like a small boy's giddy attempt to follow the goings on in all three rings of his first circus. Here was a place which could not be mapped in a day, a week or a month. And its contrast was so vividly opposite to that which Don had experienced in Traverse City that it was proving difficult for him to get used to the change. This, coupled with his natural homesickness for old companions and surroundings, accounted largely for Don's feeling that he had left much behind him which could never be replaced.

Witness the glorious Hudson river and the

mighty Palisades, for instance. Mountains of rock rising from the river's edge on the New Jersey side, to a height of from two to three hundred feet. The Hudson and Palisades undeniably wonderful, yet seeming to Don to have been spoiled by the very grip of civilization. The blue of the Hudson was dotted and gashed, night and day, by a maze of passenger, freight and pleasure craft. Tugboats puffing and chugging, pulling after them strings of barges laden with coal, sand, cement blocks, steel girders, automobile bodies and what not. White-coated steamboats making the daily excursions up to Newburg and some on to Albany, their decks crowded with men, women and children—many of them seeking surcease from the heat and discomfort of crowded tenements. Ferryboats, knifing back and forth from shore to shore, narrowly missing up and down river traffic, usually crowded to the rails with the numberless army of commuters, going to and from work. A great river harnessed to the serving of a driving humanity, her native beauty traded for the beads of commerce. And the Palisades! How gorgeous must they once have been, untouched by the transforming fingers of man! But now, a highway was chiseled across their breasts; small towns clung to their feet, with street car tracks connecting feet to head by precipitous

ascents; amusement parks and Wayside Inns thrived like weeds along their tops; while, under and above, glaring real estate signs sought to bargain away that which remained of their native virtue.

"But folks around here don't think anything about it," observed Don, "Nobody seems to care."

And so Don prepared for the overnight hike Friday after school with a half sick-at-heart sensation. If he were only going out to the woods he loved, the camp site of his old troop up Boardman lake, and with his old buddies! But here he was, in the greatest city in America, going out on a hike with a bunch of fellows whom he had barely met and yet who, already, had formed a dislike for him.

"I suppose that's my fault, though," decided Don, "I've got to live it down some way."

As the new member of Troop 36, equipped for the hike, stepped into the hall from his apartment and started downstairs to meet Ozzie in front of the building, he came face to face with the ringleader of the alley gang. Mark Whipple was on his way upstairs and grinned exultantly when he saw Don, moving over deliberately to block his path.

"All dressed up again!" he joshed, "Going some place?"

"On a hike," answered Don, without a show of malice.

"Hike, eh? Whereabouts?"

"Don't know exactly. Couple miles up the Hudson," replied Don, sparingly.

"Jersey side?"

"I guess so."

Don took a step down, brushing up against the fellow who was obstructing his progress. The ringleader of the alley gang caught his arm.

"Wait a minute! I'm not going to bite you. How you going across, by canoe?"

"What's it to you?" demanded Don, pulling away.

"Nothing much. Just curious, that's all."

"All right, we're going by ferry. Now you satisfied? Let me pass, Whipple, I'm in a hurry!"

The ringleader of the alley gang moved to one side, a something which surprised Don. He had anticipated more trouble.

"Ferry!" scoffed Mark, "That's no fun! Why don't you go by canoe?"

"Too dangerous," replied Don, starting on downstairs.

"Rats!" jeered the alley gang leader, "Ca-

noeing's not dangerous. Not if you know how to handle one."

Don paused a couple steps below and looked back.

"You know how?"

"Sure!"

"Can you tip a canoe over in mid-stream, empty the water out of it, right it, climb back in and bring it to shore?" fired Don, interested in Whipple's confident assertion.

The ringleader of the alley gang stared at the new member of Troop 36, momentarily taken aback.

"Naw! Why should I be able to do that?" he rejoined, in obvious disgust.

"Why, in case anything should ever happen," explained Don, "You'd be prepared."

"Say," snapped Mark, caustically, "That's the trouble with you guys. You're always worrying over something happening. 'Fraidy cats, the whole bunch of you! Run when you see your own shadows. Holler before you're hurt. Take this straight, Rader. You're not a bad sort. We're forgetting what happened the other night. Better ditch that bunch of mamma's boys and join a real crowd!"

The invitation, roughly put, came as a jolt. Well! Evidently his standing his ground had won some respect. What a compliment! To

be offered membership in the alley gang! The situation struck Don as humorous. But he carefully concealed his amusement.

"Thanks, Whipple," he replied, "Your crowd and I wouldn't mix!"

With this, Don continued on down the stairs, being conscious of a door slamming violently above him.

Ozzie was waiting impatiently out in front, pacing up and down and glancing anxiously at his wrist watch.

"Boy, I was just going to beat it," he declared, as Don appeared, "No sense in my waiting here anyhow except I thought you'd be out in plenty of time. We've only three minutes!"

"I know," answered Don, falling in beside Ozzie at a dog trot pace, "But we ought to be able to do a block a minute."

"Just about," agreed Ozzie, "Good thing I didn't ask Lump to wait, though. He travels by freight. What's the matter, weren't you watching your time?"

"Yeah, but that guy Whipple stopped me."

"Oh, he did?" Ozzie glanced at Don sharply. "I saw him go in. I wondered if you'd run into him. What did he do? Jump on you?"

Don shook his head. The two of them turned

the corner onto Fort Washington and spied the gathering of their fellow scouts on the schoolhouse corner. Hands were waved urging them on.

"There's your friend Lump ahead of us," pointed out Don, "Let's beat him. Make him the last one there."

The new member of Troop 36 put on a burst of speed which was equaled by Ozzie.

"You didn't tell me what happened," reminded Ozzie, "What was Whipple's idea—stopping you?"

"Chew the fat mostly," breathed Don, "But then, I guess the real reason was . . . he wanted to ask me to join his gang."

"What?" Ozzie almost stopped running, "Well, for gosh sakes!"

Don grinned. "We're almost up on Lump now! Oh, oh! The fellows are wise and they're giving Lump the 'come on'! Look at Lump light out! We'll have to leg it now, Ozzie, and no mistake!"

It was no easy matter, making fast time with scout packs and equipment. Some tin cups and dishes in Lump's kit clanged and clattered as he puffed along, adding to the commotion.

"Step on her, Lump!" petitioned his comrades on the schoolhouse corner, "They're right behind you!"

"Gee, that's a scream!" cried Bean, holding himself with laughter, "Lump's running as far sideways as he is frontwards! It'll take him forever to get here!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler gravely consulted his watch.

Half a block from the school house corner the lumbering Lump was caught and passed

"Oh, my jiminy!" roared Sly, "Look at that, will you?"

Lump, in his desperation, had flung off his pack as one would discard ballast but he still lacked pounds of making his load light enough for sturdy legs to carry him in ahead. Ozzie and Don reached the school corner in a dead heat, bringing up panting for breath and perspiring profusely.

"Whew!" gasped Ozzie.

"Barely in time," announced the Scoutmaster, "She's four-fifteen exactly."

The plump form of Lump staggered up and dropped down wearily on the curb.

"What's the matter with you, Lump? Where have you been? You're late!" bawled Scoutmaster Wheeler.

"Late?" groaned Lump, looking up, head on hand.

"I should say so. We've been waiting on you. What have you got to say for yourself?"

Lump put on a pathetic expression. "I'm all in!"

"See here! That's not what I asked you. We don't care how you feel. But why were you late?"

Scoutmaster Wheeler had difficulty keeping his face straight. Lump was a perfect clown. The innocence which now showed in his chubby face would have almost caused anyone to forgive him a genuine offense.

"If you please, sir," begged Lump, "I was late on account of losing something again."

"I see," returned the Scoutmaster, "That's very serious. And what was it this time?"

"My pack," announced Lump, without blinking.

Fellow scouts tittered.

"Your pack! And do you have it now?"

"No, sir. I came along without it!"

"You did! But don't you know you can't go on a hike until you find it?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Lump, grinning, "But that's what I was counting on you doing, sir."

"Me?" exclaimed Scoutmaster Wheeler, "And where and how would I be finding your pack?"

"Like you did my badge, sir—in my *pocket!*"

The scouts howled.

"Lump wins," smiled the Scoutmaster "Sly,

you run down the block and pick up his pack for him. All right, fellows, we're off;"

It was a comparatively short hike from the school corner to the Dyckman Street Ferry and once aboard the boat the fellows made a rush for the front deck where they might command the best view during the short trip across the river.

"Well, Michigan, what do you think of this for a piece of scenery?" asked Bean, as the ferry swung out into the Hudson, commanding a far-reaching sight up and down.

Don's face colored. "The scenery's great," he replied, honestly.

"Wait till you really begin to see it," put in Scout Art Runkle.

"Anything in Michigan that can beat those cliffs?" Sly wanted to know, pointing to the towering Palisades

"They're beautiful," the new member of Troop 36 admitted, gazing up at them as the ferry neared the Jersey shore

"Look at the city of New York away off down there," directed Lump, "Almost a bird's eye. See that tower that gleams in the sun? That's the Metropolitan! . . . And over a little to the right . . . that tall building in the haze—the Woolworth! . . . Would you

think we could be camping this close to one of the biggest cities in the world? Now look up there along the Palisades where we're going!"

Don followed Lump's extended arm. He was seeing the Palisades now at close range. Sheer rock heights towering overhead. Even Nature, with her centuries of vegetation, was unable to blot out their grand outlines. Here was a history of glacial periods! Great earthquakes! Cataclysmic changes! Not completely conquered yet, not by some generations! Plenty for the trained eye to search out and the trained mind to study!

A surge of awesome interest came over Don, an interest which he had not experienced since his departure from Traverse City.

"This is going to be real exploration!" he told himself.

"Everybody off!" boomed the voice of the ferry captain.

And Don, only regretting that fellow scouts were still rubbing it in to him over his unfortunate breaks about Michigan, took his place near the head of the troop as the bunch started their hike along the foot of the Palisades to the spot selected by Scoutmaster Wheeler for an overnight camp.

CHAPTER IV

IN NEED OF HELP

A SMALL colony of pup tents erected on a projecting point of the Palisades, two miles up the shore from the ferry landing, soon marked the camping place of the twenty-seven scouts in Troop 36. Four patrols of them, there were, with three over, a three which Scoutmaster Wheeler had instructed to go out and get five new candidates so as to bring the Troop up to full quota and give them more company.

"But where'll we get 'em?" the three had implored, and the Scoutmaster had characteristically replied: "Where'll you find four leaf clovers? Don't ask me! But get 'em! We need 'em! Remember, this Troop's just what you make it and don't come beefing to me if you're not satisfied with what you've got. You fellows have got to get over the idea that I'm going to blow your noses for you! You're the ones that are doing things in this Troop, not me!"

The effect of this kind of talk was evidenced in the manner the scouts fell to and laid hold of

the work to be done in making camp. Scoutmaster Wheeler had little to do, as he afterwards said, "but keep constantly getting out of somebody's way." And it was Lump who, turning in the best job of cooking to pass his second class test, declared that Scoutmaster Wheeler was "as useless as a leaky tea kettle!" But a few minutes later a much aggrieved Lump was finding the Scoutmaster good for something.

"Mr. Wheeler!" he complained, "You know that steak I cooked . . . and those two potatoes?"

"Why, yes, Lump, I believe you introduced them to me."

"Well, sir, I hate to trouble you, but they er . . . seem to have been er . . . swiped . . . I mean—*lost!*"

"Lump, you don't seem to be able to keep track of anything!" reprimanded the Scoutmaster.

"Aw, for Pete's sake!" interjected Bean, "Of course they're lost! Lump *ate* 'em!"

"What?" gasped Lump. "Ate my own cooking? *Never!*"

"Sure you did!" insisted Sly, "We saw you!"

"Oh, my jingo!" groaned Lump, "Why

didn't you tell me? Somebody give me first aid, quick!"

By the time camp had been made and suppers cooked over open fires, it was dusk and there was little opportunity for much activity that evening. But the whole day of Saturday was before them and the Troop gathered around a crackling camp fire down near the river's edge, with different members taking turns entertaining the bunch. A wall of shadowy blackness surrounded them, pierced by a maze of lights almost as myriad as the Milky Way overhead. Especially was this true in the direction of lower Manhattan Island where the illumination from Broadway's great white way shimmered against the sky.

"Think of the crowds of people down in that theatre district right now," reflected Sly, "Paying good money to see their favorite stars while we're out here, looking at all the stars, and it isn't costing us a cent!"

Sly's apt comparison drew a laugh.

"What can you do for us, Michigan?" called Bean as every scout in the circle had contributed something with the exception of the new member. Don had sat quietly through it all, quite reserved and sober, gazing into the fire. He raised his head now and looked around at

the flickering faces, turned his way. Faces dancing behind the heat waves of the fire, eyes centering upon him, sizing him up, passing judgement.

"Why, I . . . I might sing a little," volunteered Don, hesitantly.

"Sing!" echoed Ozzie, "Suffering cats!"

"Suffering *scouts!*" corrected the new member, smiling.

"Hear him!" shouted Sly, "We'll take a chance on the suffering."

"Stand up!" cried a chorus of voices.

And Don, getting to his feet clumsily, stood wetting his lips and slicking down his hair.

"You fellows probably know the song I'm going to try to sing," he said, a bit huskily, "It's the song my old Troop used to sing." The new member caught himself. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to mention it again."

"Go ahead!" came a sympathetic voice.

"We're with you!" said someone from the shadows.

"That's what I hope," took up Don, "You join *with* me in the song. I'll sing the verse and then let's all get together on the chorus."

There was a moment as the fellow who was to sing, cleared his throat. And then, in a voice of surprising quality, the song was started.

"Say, *he* can sing!" someone murmured.

But all were attentively listening to the words:

Oh, I'm a scouting trooper who roams the
forest through,
I know my way by daylight and in the
moonlight too,
And if you'll only follow, I'll show the way
to you;
I'm a typical scout you've heard about and
one of a jolly crew . . .

"Come on, fellows!" appealed Don, extending his arms, and they came—twenty-six of them strong!

I'm one of a, one of a, one of a, one of a,
One of a jolly crew!
And I'm one of a, one of a, one of a, one
of a,
ONE OF A JOLLY CREW!

"One of a jolly crew!" It came back to them from over the water as their voices died out on the last notes of the song. One of a jolly crew! How much had *they* done toward making the new member *one* of a jolly crew? The thought came home to each at seemingly the same instant and a warm wave of feeling went out to the fellow so far removed from his own jolly crew.

"Let's sing that chorus again!" proposed Lump, with a lump this time in his throat.

And every member of Troop 36 responded

whole-heartedly, eyes on Scout Rader as he led them, voices full and joyous.

"That's great, fellows," Don complimented huskily at the finish.

"Say, we ought to appoint Don song leader after that!" suggested Sly, with enthusiasm, "How about it, Mr. Wheeler? He's even got a better voice than *you* have!"

The Scoutmaster bowed acknowledgment amid a storm of "Yeas!"

"Congratulations, Don! To eclipse me in singing is a rare accomplishment because I have such a *rare* voice."

"Ow!"

"Hey, no fair!"

"Mr. Wheeler's just kidding. He used to sing bass in a quartet!"

"I thought it was soprano!"

"No, he sang bass, *very* bass!"

"Anyhow, Don's our song leader from now on. What do you say, fellows?" demanded Sly quickly.

"You bet!"

"He's the berries!"

"No, fellows, I . . . someone else . . . !" protested Don.

"Try to get out of it!" came an answering chorus.

And then, as if by mutual consent, Don's new

buddies commenced a chant which evidently was original with them.

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good *fel-el-low!*
AND—we don't mean *maybe!*"

The Troop's way of telling the new member that all had been forgiven!

At ten o'clock fires were banked for the night and everybody prepared to turn in. A damp, cool mist had come creeping up the river, blurring the lights and making visibility poor. The camp was pitched under the brow of a bluff which inclined some fifty feet on a steep rise to a highway above with the majestic wall of the Palisades looming over all. A sparkling spring bubbled from an overhanging rock and a little footpath had been beaten to it. Further down from the point was a narrow strip of beach and a shallow dropping off of the water which formed a natural swimming pool. The beach was only temporary, however, as the tide reached out long arms twice a day and swallowed it up. But the scouts were upon a barren point so far as other habitation was concerned. A half a mile or more down the river occasional boat houses pointed to the existence of cottages and possible little villages on

the other side of the highway in the breaks of the Palisades. An overnight camp site within hiking distance of a city of six million souls . . . and yet giving the illusion of almost complete aloneness!

Don lay in his tent perhaps an hour after he was supposed to have been asleep, going over his evening's experience. It had all been very wonderful. Made a tremendous difference whether a bunch was for a fellow or against him. That terribly depressed feeling was gone now. Oh, it seemed good just to be alive and to be exactly where he was!

Alertly conscious of every sound, Don took to peering out through the river mist at dimly passing craft, and timing how long it took for the backwash to come pounding in on shore. The waves seemed to steal up in the darkness, betraying their nearness only by a sudden, startling gurgle before the inrush of the water. The whole effect was thrillingly fascinating to the boy from Michigan.

"The river's telegraph system," thought Don, "Telling whoever's interested that a boat's just passed."

The chill of the night and the fog made the new member of Troop 36 glad that he had brought along a warm blanket.

"I almost ought to keep my clothes under

cover," Don speculated once, "They'll be pretty damp by morning."

But he resisted the temptation and settled himself at last for some sleep. He wanted to awaken early that he might see the sunrise over the Hudson. Yes, the sunrise . . . the sunrise . . . for he was one of a jolly crew . . . a jolly crew . . . one of a . . . a . . . asleep!

"All right, guys!" directed a voice from the darkness, "They ought to be cookied now. Take it easy, though. It's three of us against about thirty and we don't dare pull a boner."

"You said it," whispered an exceptionally large, ugly-faced fellow. "We don't want to forget how to get back to our canoe, either!"

"I'll say not," rejoined the figure in charge, "We want to teach these little Boy Scouts a lesson they won't soon forget. If we pull this right we'll have a laugh on them that won't wear off."

"Can you imagine those birds running around in the morning in nothing but their undershirts?" grinned the third member of the trio, "Oh, boy—I'd give anything to see 'em!"

"What'll we do with their clothes?" asked the big fellow, "Take 'em to the other side with us?"

"We won't have room," whispered the leader, "And if we hide 'em they're sure to find 'em. What we'll have to do is drop 'em in the river!"

"But, gee, if we're ever caught!"

"Say, who's going to get caught? You're talking like a Boy Scout! Who in that bunch can catch us?"

"Yeah, but uniforms cost money and . . ."

"I tell you we can reach in those pup tents and sneak their clothes out so easy that there won't be anything to it. And those tired little boys won't be any the wiser till they wake up in the morning. By that time we'll be miles from here!"

"All right, chief! Let's go!" assented the big fellow.

"Each take a row of tents," directed the leader, "We'll go around so we can work back this way toward our canoe. Now take your time. Roll their clothes up like I showed you, with their shoes inside. We've got to take their shoes . . . these rocks'll murder their bare feet!"

"Probably have to make two trips to finish the job," guessed the smallest member of the trio.

"What of it?" rejoined the leader, "It's only one o'clock. We want to do this thing up slick.

Shouldn't take us more than half an hour at that!"

The three crept forward stealthily.

The new member of Troop 36 had not slept very soundly. He was less accustomed to river noises and several times the sudden droning of a fog horn or the rumbling roar of a freight train brought him back to consciousness. On one of these occasions, Don raised up on his elbow. Hello! A breeze must have picked up! The side of his tent was moving . . . and now the opening was pulling back gently . . . almost as though it were flapping and ballooning with a gust of air. But . . . but . . . there was no air!

Don sat half upright, reaching quietly for his flashlight.

"I can't be awake yet," he told himself.

He was surrounded by gray darkness in which everything was outlined. As his eyes became more accustomed to conditions, it seemed to Don that he could make out the figure of someone kneeling just outside his tent.

"One of the guys up to something," he decided, "I'll wait and hand him a surprise!"

He did not have to wait long. An arm soon appeared followed by the head and shoulders of the figure.

"Oho!" thought Don, as he watched the hand

reach out, "So he's after my clothes, eh? Well, we'll soon put a stop to this!"

The hand reached the clothes and, with a practiced movement, started lifting them noiselessly from the tent. But just at this moment a flood of light struck the intruding figure squarely in the face.

"Whipple!" exclaimed Don, in amazement.

The new member of Troop 36 lunged forward, dropping his flashlight. He caught the arm of the alley gang leader as Whipple desperately tried to make a get-away. The two fell to the ground inside the tent and rolled over, taking the tent with them.

"Help!" shouted Don, fearful that the whole alley gang was at hand.

His shout was half-muffled by Whipple who had anticipated an out-cry. The two were entangled in the folds of the tent, the one struggling to get free, the other to hold on. Whipple, however, was in the more advantageous position for Don, in order to grab him, had practically pulled the gang leader down on top.

"Someone call?" he heard a voice ask in the next tent, and then, "Hey, what's going on out there?"

The sound of the scuffle had been heard.

"Help!" cried Don, tearing Whipple's hand from his mouth, ". . .'elp!"

But there was no holding the gang leader. He broke loose just as flashlights began to gleam in nearby tents and excited cries sounded out.

"Beat it, guys!" called the gang leader but this admonition was not needed for his two accomplices were already nearing the canoe and the clothes they had piled at the river's edge.

"Hurry up, Whip!" they entreated.

Don, at a moment when he would have given pursuit, was left so mixed up in his own tent that he had to have help in extricating himself.

"What's the matter? What's happened?" asked Ozzie, pulling Don to his feet.

"The alley gang!" gasped Don, "Stop 'em, somebody!"

"My clothes!" came the cry, "Where are my clothes?"

"Somebody's got our clothes!" The entire troop was waking up to this realization now.

"There they are!" cried Lump, pointing toward the shore where the three gang members, not stopping to gather up the clothes, were pushing off in the canoe. But the pile of clothes went unnoticed by the scouts in their excitement as Lump continued, "Catch 'em! They're making off with our stuff!"

The boys, with one accord, rushed toward the water, stumbling in their bare feet over sharp

stones. But the bold invaders, paddling furiously, were thirty feet off shore by the time their pursuers reached the river's edge.

"Hey, here's our clothes!" discovered Bean, tripping over a heaped up pile, "Oh, boy! We were just in time!"

The scouts gathered around, each sorting through the pile for his own stuff.

At that moment the partly clad troop was shocked by a terrorizing cry from off shore.

"H-E-L-P!"

"What's that?"

Eyes strained in an attempt to penetrate the heavy mist.

"It's the fellows in that canoe!" shouted Sly, "They've tipped over!"

"Serves 'em right!" cried Lump, "Now maybe we'll be able to catch 'em!"

"Look at 'em splash water!" exclaimed Bean, "My gosh, can't they swim?"

"H-E-L-P, YOU FELLOWS! H-E-L-P!"

A sudden realization that the trio in the water were actually in distress sent quivers running up and down the spine of every scout. The tip-over had occurred when Rex Eggers, the big fellow, had lost his paddle and, in reaching excitedly for it, had leaned too far over the side. Of the three Rex was least familiar with the water, while Pat Dugan, the little fellow, and

Mark Whipple, could swim just well enough to keep themselves afloat. The moment they came to the surface, Rex had clutched frantically at Mark, drawing them both under. Mark, in turn, had grabbed at Pat as he rose chokingly to the surface. And, in the suddenness of the accident, no one had the presence of mind to cling to the canoe which had drifted swiftly off downstream, carried by both current and tide.

CHAPTER V

TO THE RESCUE

SCOUTMASTER WHEELER was quick to sense that the plight of the three gang members was one requiring instant action. The necessary seconds' delay to find and get a piece of drift wood out to them would likely prove fatal. And there was no boat to be had within the immediate vicinity. Moreover the drowning trio were being carried out into the river so that they would soon be lost to sight in the fog and darkness.

"Help!" came a despairing shout. And then again, chokingly, "H-E-L-P!"

"We'll have to go to them," decided the Scoutmaster, "Who'll volunteer?"

"I, sir!" The new member of Troop 36 was the first to speak.

"Not you, Don, you're not used to the river."

But five other eager scouts were crowding at Don's elbow.

"Me, sir! Let me go!" they chorused.

Ozzie added himself to the group.

"You three!" picked the Scoutmaster, tapping Sly, Bean and Ozzie on the shoulder, "Go out and hold those fellows up till we get a boat out to you!"

The three chosen set out at once, hurrying along the shore and peering into the mist.

"I can't see 'em!" said Sly, and made a megaphone of his hands, "Where are you?"

And almost at once the agonizing answer, "Help!" The cry came from a point almost opposite them and about a hundred feet out as nearly as they could judge. The three rescuers plunged in, leaving to those on shore the task of guiding them to the drowning parties.

"Where are you?" fellow scouts repeated.

"Help!" came the reply, more and more despairing. And finally a scream, "HURRY!"

"Hey, what's the matter with Ozzie?" cried a scout, "He's turning back!"

"Watch Ozzie!" Sly called in, "He's got a cramp!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler was not a crack swimmer. It was consequently good judgment for him to have remained on shore rather than run the risk of getting in danger himself. Besides, a rescue was not effected by merely sending boys out to keep drowning fellows afloat. The tide and current of the old Hudson was a thing to contend with. And just as much depended

on material aid being speedily secured and dispatched to them.

"Squint, take Ozzie's place!" directed Scoutmaster Wheeler, "Art, go out and come in with Ozzie!"

The command was scarcely issued than the two scouts were in the water. Other sharp commands sent scouts rushing off in pairs to follow up every possible avenue for arousing assistance. Their shouts echoed and re-echoed across the dark reaches of the Hudson on which no boat was now in sight. Scrambling onto the highway a patrol, under Lump's leadership, prepared to stop the first passing auto and dash madly ahead to the nearest town. A detachment of scouts was delegated to follow along the river's edge keeping pace with the movement of those in the water. And the others, having put on their shoes, were sent stumbling and running up and down the shore line, searching every nook and crevice for any kind of a skiff or place that might conceal one. These searchers were led by Scoutmaster Wheeler himself, accompanied by Don, the two of them rushing frenziedly down the rocky shore.

Sly and Bean were now out of sight, and Squint, with desperate strokes, was rapidly losing himself in the mist.

"Squint's coming!" cried those on shore, "Where are you, fellows?"

A moment's tingling silence and then a muffled shout from Bean.

"Here!"

Those on shore gasped. The voice was easily ten feet ahead of their position on the river's edge.

"Boy, how that river takes 'em!" exclaimed a scout, in awed amazement.

"Not a sound from the other guys," another pointed out, "Did you notice that?"

Those delegated to keep in touch with the ones in the water nodded, anxiously. Each was reluctant to give expression to the fear that . . . !

And then a feeble, gurgling cry, "*Help*" followed at once by Sly's excited shout: "Here they are, Bean . . . over this way! . . . Hurry up, Squint!"

The next few seconds were pulsating ones for all concerned. Those on shore strained mightily to pick up the least tell-tale sound of what was taking place somewhere out before them on the black, treacherous surface of the Hudson. But there was no sound save the distant shouts of the scouts on the highway and the long tooting of a freight engine from the New York side.

"Hey, fellows!" implored a watcher, fearsomely.

No answer, but voices now, indistinct, growing louder.

"I got him, Bean . . . never mind!"

"Don't let him grab you, Squint! Go down with him! Go down with him!"

A very audible sound of splashing and a wild cry, "Help!"

"Someone's causing trouble!" divined a scout, shuddering.

Those on shore were gripped by a feeling of frantic helplessness. Another moment of terrific suspense. And, at last, Sly's welcome voice.

"That's the way, Squint! Hold onto him! Now you got him!" Sly then hastened to reassure those on shore. "All right, in there!" he called, "We got 'em!"

"YEA!" cheered fellow scouts, impulsively.

"Great work!" shouted one, "Stay with it! We'll pick you up in just a few minutes!"

Friendly hands reached out to help the returning Ozzie ashore. He left the water several hundred yards below the point he had entered, closely followed by Scout Art Runkle.

"How are you?" Ozzie was asked.

"Okay now," he answered, explaining, "Had a bad cramp in my leg!"

"Water's darn chilly," added Art.

A half mile down the shore Scoutmaster Wheeler and the new member of Troop 36, bruised and wearied from falling and climbing over rocks in their mad search for some form of river craft, came at last within sight of a boathouse. As they did so, on the highway above, the dim lights of a car flashed past.

"Help's coming!" promised a voice, bellowing out encouragement to those in the water.

"That's Lump!" recognized the Scoutmaster, "There's a town half a mile below here. If we should miss them, he'll . . . !"

The boathouse was a staunchly constructed building, evidently designed for the purpose of resisting marauders. There were no windows and the door was strongly locked.

Scoutmaster Wheeler glanced about hurriedly for a piece of timber with which to push the door in. The range of his flashlight revealed none.

"Hold your flashlight on the door!" cried Don, backing up the runway, "I'll get it open!"

With the door the center of a spot of light, Don dashed forward with all the speed he could command. A few strides away he jumped, feet first, stiffening his legs, making of himself a *hundred pound* human catapult.

Feet struck the door just opposite the knob on the center panel. A splintering crash followed, the impact wrenching the door from its hinges and hurling it inside. Don himself shot through the doorway and landed heavily atop the door. He was on his feet in an instant, limping.

"A row boat!" shouted Don, as Scoutmaster Wheeler played his light inside, "And a dandy! . . . But . . . *no oars!*"

"Oh, they must be here somewhere. Probably hidden!"

A hasty search, however, failed to unearth them.

From outside came the sound of voices. The scouts on shore now opposite the boathouse, indicating that those in the water were passing that point.

"Making out all right, fellows?" went the cry.

"Yes, but hurry that boat!" came the imploring answer.

Scoutmaster Wheeler laid hold of a piece of siding.

"Here, Don, help me rip a couple of these off, will you? We've got to have something to paddle with."

Securing the boards was the work of a couple of seconds. The lower end of the boathouse was

in the water. Don quickly unbarred and swung open the door, clambering in the boat as Scoutmaster Wheeler pushed off.

"Here we come, fellows!" he shouted.

And the cry was taken up by over-joyed scouts nearby. It was a bit unwieldy, handling the boat with their crude oars, but Don and Scoutmaster Wheeler, both fortunately old hands at canoeing and rowing, managed remarkably well. Don, in the stern, had the greater task of steering.

Of a sudden, down the river, a fire siren commenced screaming. Moving lights became discernible through the mist along the river's edge. Then the clang of a fire department truck was heard and the faint sound of excited voices.

"Lump's roused the whole town!" surmised Scoutmaster Wheeler, grimly, "Sly! . . . Bean! . . . Squint! . . . Give me your bearings, will you?"

"Here!" they answered almost at once, sounding some hundred feet from the boat and ahead.

"How close together are you?" asked the Scoutmaster.

"Not far," replied Sly.

In another moment the Scoutmaster and Don caught sight of them. Squint, supporting Rex

Eggers, was nearest; Bean, with Pat Dugan in tow, next; and Sly, holding up Mark Whipple, barely visible ahead.

It took care, maneuvering the boat alongside with the board paddles. Scoutmaster Wheeler, bending over, seized Squint's arm, then, reaching down, caught hold of the heavy Rex Eggers who was so exhausted that he could do little to help himself. Squint grasped the gunwale of the boat and helped lift Rex over the side, Don crawling forward and lending a hand also. The boat, meanwhile, had drifted downstream, passing close to Bean, with his burden.

"Never mind me," said Squint, "I'll hang on the stern."

With the biggest of the three gang members safely aboard, Scoutmaster Wheeler and Don swung their boat around and headed for Bean. Squint assisted, this time, swimming alongside Bean and giving a boost to Pat Dugan as he was hoisted into the boat. Pat was also well spent and slumped down, weakly, beside Rex. Bean joined Squint, clinging to the stern.

"Now for Sly!" cried the Scoutmaster, "Oh, Sly, where are you?"

"Here!" came the answer.

The sound of the voice appeared between the boat and the shore. In the distance the welcome chug! chug! of a launch brought new

assurance. Lump's rescue party on the way!

"Hello, out there!" cried a voice.

"Hello!" Don replied.

"There's Sly!" sighted Squint, "On your right!"

"Better not take any more aboard," counseled the Scoutmaster, "Catch on here and wait for the launch!"

As the boat came alongside, Squint and Bean grabbed Sly and helped him get a hold on the boat. Ringleader Mark Whipple, teeth chattering, glassy-eyed, tried to grip the side but lacked the strength to hang on.

"Hold on to me!" he pleaded. "Don't let me go!"

"You're all right!" Sly reassured, "We'll have you in shore in a jiffy!"

The searchlight of the launch appeared through the fog and the motor was cut down. Lying stretched out on the boat's prow was Lump.

"Here they are!" he announced, "Easy now! Easy!"

The pick-ups were made without incident, the rescued trio being transferred to the launch first and the rescuers being taken aboard immediately following. Scoutmaster Wheeler and Don refused to leave the rowboat and hooked on behind the launch for a tow. The

HE JUMPED, FEET FIRST, MAKING OF HIMSELF A HUNDRED POUND CATAPULT.

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party then set out for shore at all possible speed.

"There's an ambulance and doctors waiting," Lump informed.

But, on arrival, it was found that the three rescued needed no medical attention with the exception of superficial treatment for submersion and shock. It was discovered, however, that the new member of Troop 36 had suffered a deep gash on his right knee cap, acquired in breaking down the boat house door. Don had said nothing about it but, trying to favor the leg, had stumbled and fallen in climbing from the boat. This injury was dressed by the ambulance surgeon who also insisted on looking Sly, Bean and Squint over, pronouncing each of the hardy scouts "none the worse for wear."

"Wrap 'em in blankets and give 'em something warm to drink," was his only prescription.

Most of the troop members had followed on down to the town, none of whom was completely dressed. A detail had remained behind to guard the camp. Not a few, now that the great excitement was over, found time to make sport of each other's ludicrous appearance. Lump's chubby figure, especially, clad only in B.V.D.'s, with feet encased in what Art unkindly termed,

"number thirteens," came in for much good-natured guying.

"Say, I've had enough trouble already in this outfit," complained Lump, "Everybody took me for a marathon runner and a couple of cars went by me without stopping. I just about had to lie down in front of the one that *did* stop!"

Townspeople with automobiles kindly offered to transport the three fast recovering gang members to the ferry and members of the Troop back to camp.

"Fellows," said a greatly changed Mark Whipple, before departure, "We'll never forget this. After the dirty trick we tried to play on you, too!"

"Aw, that's all right," responded Sly, a bit embarrassed.

"Sure!" echoed the Troop members.

Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan could say nothing, but each looked his gratitude.

"I take back anything I ever said against you fellows," the ringleader of the gang apologized, "And I want to tell you right here and now what I think." He paused a moment, and when he spoke again there was a huskiness in his throat. "You're *real* scouts!"

CHAPTER VI

BEFRIENDING AN ENEMY

SATURDAY at camp, following the strenuous happenings of early morning, was comparatively mild. Troop members were permitted to follow pretty much their own line of activity, many of whom were interested in working on various units which each desired to qualify in. Lump was interested in learning the Semaphore Code as were several others, and Don took them aside for instruction. Sly, Bean and Ozzie went on a tracking expedition. Art and Squint departed with the avowed intention of discovering all there was to know about plants and trees, to which declaration Pink had rejoined humorously, "All right, guys. Goodbye forever!"

Late that afternoon a happy crowd returned to New York City, perhaps the happiest of which was the new member of Troop 36. Scout Donald Rader had proven himself a regular fellow, so much so that his new buddies had even asked him to tell them more of Traverse City and his old troop! In surroundings so

congenial, only one thing was troubling Don. His injured knee had become quite stiff.

"I'd hate like everything to miss being on on duty Monday," he told the Scoutmaster, "I've got to see Lindy!"

"Don't worry," Scoutmaster Wheeler assured, "You'll see Lindy if we have to carry you downtown and back!"

Leaving the ferry Don limped to Broadway where he was helped aboard a street car by Lump and Ozzie. On the way home conversation quite naturally worked around to the subject of the rescue.

"Tough break you got," Lump sympathized, addressing Ozzie, "Catching that cramp when you were in line to do your bit. You could have saved any one of those fellows just as well as Sly or Bean or Squint, and a chance like that would have helped toward your Eagle."

Ozzie looked distressed.

"I know it," he admitted, "But I'd have been foolish trying to go on. I couldn't tell whether the cramp was going to last. It might have gotten worse."

"You never can tell," agreed Lump, "I'd have come in myself, wouldn't you, Don?"

Don nodded. "If I'd gotten a cramp? I sure would!"

Ozzie's face brightened hopefully.

"Well, in one way, it seems to me a fellow's almost entitled to as much credit for starting out to do a piece of work . . . especially if something happens beyond his control to keep him from finishing it. What do *you* think?"

"Maybe so," replied Lump uncertainly.

"It isn't credit that counts anyway," declared Don, "It's what you *do*. And why should a guy be wanting to take credit for what he should have done? You don't see a skilled mechanic running around, shouting for recognition because he's done a day's work If we've been trained to save lives our duty is to do our best when the chance comes. But a scout who tries to glorify everything he does . . . well, I don't think there's anything cheaper!"

"Me, either!" seconded Ozzie, his face coloring. "I didn't mean . . . !"

"Say!" broke in Lump, "Don didn't mean anything personal! What's biting you?"

"Well, son," said Mr. Rader, when Don had reached home, "What do you think of the new crowd?"

"I think they're great!" Don answered, quickly.

Mrs. Rader smiled.

"He wasn't so sure he was going to like them the other day," she ventured.

"No," admitted Don, slowly, "But this was because . . . well, something was wrong with me . . . not them. And when I got that straightened out so they could like me . . ." He shrugged his shoulders. "I didn't have any trouble liking them."

Mr. Rader leaned back in his easy chair, studying his boy.

"That's right, Don," he approved. "When anything goes wrong, never blame the other fellow. Look inside yourself first. You'll generally find that you've been the start of the whole business. Sometimes it's pretty hard to admit it, though."

Don grinned.

"I *know* that," he confessed.

"Tell me," inquired Dad Rader, "How'd you hurt that leg?"

"Why, I . . ." started Don, a bit confused, "Jumping."

"Must have been *some* jump!" speculated Mr. Rader, eyeing his son shrewdly.

"It *was!*" agreed Don, and laughed.

Dad Rader did not press him for particulars.

The room Don called his was on the court. From his window he could look down four flights to the cement courtyard below. It was

an uninspiring sight. Not at all like the one from his room in Traverse which commanded a view of Grand Traverse Bay. But this was a part of his past and one shouldn't live in the past. A scout looked ahead, not behind. So Don tried to see beauty even in drabness. Think of the Whipples, for instance. They had no other outlook but the court. All the rooms in their apartment faced on it.

"While we have three front rooms that look out on the Hudson river," thought Don, "We *should* kick!"

Then he fell to wondering what it was about people that made some so desirous of a pleasant outlook and others who seemingly didn't care.

"Maybe it's a difference in character," he reflected, "Maybe the ones who like a nice outlook have a better outlook on life. Anyhow, it's worth checking up on."

Don was sufficiently tired after his overnight camping experience to be ready to retire early. He stretched out on his bed with a feeling of relief. Now, if only the sounds on the court would cease! If the half dozen or more tenants who had their radios going full force on different programs would either all tune in on the same one for harmony's sake or shut their sets off altogether! If the baby that always cried

about this time would only keep still! If the couple down in 23-C would learn to tone down their voices and not tell the whole apartment about their day's happenings! If, and if, and IF . . . ! These were all noises to which Don had not yet fully accustomed himself. Think of it, hundreds of families living in such close proximity to one another! With thin and far from sound-proof walls the only separation! No front porches, no hammocks or swings under the cool of shady trees, no green of lawns, no backyards with garden plots. . . . just a group of rooms, three or four or five . . . small rooms at that, which didn't really belong to you and which, somehow, didn't—couldn't—have the same quality of living.

"But lots of folks seem to be happy living in 'em," Don was forced to conclude, "So I guess it's all in getting used to it."

After which observation he promptly fell asleep.

But Don's rest, for the second consecutive night, was destined to be disturbed. He awakened this time with a sudden start which caused him to raise instantly up in bed. If he had not been the victim of a nightmare he was certain he had heard the ending of a bloodcurdling scream. For the moment, however, everything

was still save a small alarm clock on the dresser which ticked along unconcernedly with hands pointing to a quarter after one.

"Funny thing," thought Don, rubbing a hand over his forehead, "I was sure . . . !"

There it was again!

A terror-stricken shriek.

"Oh! Don't you touch me! Tom, dear, please!"

Windows began going up on the court while others were slamming down to shut out the disturbance.

A man's voice broke out next in a round of abuse and cursing. Don crept to his window, pushed it up quietly, and looked out.

"Keep quiet up there!" cried an angry tenant.

"That's what I say!" shouted another, "We've had enough out of them already!"

And now a boy's voice, pleading, urging . . .

"Listen, Dad, you're drunk! Go lie down, won't you? Leave Mom alone. She hasn't done anything to you!"

"She ain't, eh? You look out, young man! I'll give you a dose the same medicine!"

Something crashed in the apartment.

"Oh, someone call the police!" cried a hysterical woman tenant on the floor below.

"It's Mark's folks," realized Don, with a wave of sympathy. "Gee, what a life! I guess this is the kind of a scrap Ozzie was telling me about."

The Whipple apartment, almost directly across the court from the rear of that occupied by the Raders, was a blaze of light. It looked as though every light in the apartment had been turned on. The blinds were down, however, so that Don could not see in except that he could detect shadows as figures passed behind.

"I don't care if you did!" boomed Mr. Whipple's voice again, "You know what I said and I. . . ."

There was the shadow of an arm raising.

"Mark!" shrieked a woman's voice.

"Call the police! Call the police!" begged the tenant below.

Don, watching breathlessly, saw the figure of Mark pass the curtain, then heard sounds of a scuffle.

"See here, you!" bawled the father, "Keep out of this! . . ."

"Shut up, up there, and go to bed!" called an irate tenant.

More windows flew up.

"Isn't this terrible?" said a voice, "Those people will have to be put out. If they're not we'll break our lease!"

"Where's the superintendent?" asked another, "He should hear this!"

"It's an outrage!" denounced a third.

A rap sounded on Don's door. He left the window to open it, admitting his father.

"What's all this?" demanded Mr. Rader.

"It's the Whipples, Dad," explained Don, "They're having a fight."

"I should say they are," agreed Mr. Rader, "I've been listening to the commotion for the past half hour. This sort of thing ought to be stopped!"

"I guess it will pretty soon," answered Don, "There goes somebody's police whistle!"

A dog in the courtyard aroused, added his peppery barking to the din. Lights were now on in almost every window of the court, with tenants talking and calling excitedly as enraged oaths and heavy noises, punctuated by a woman's hysterical screams, came from the one apartment across the court occupied by the Whipples.

"Tom! Tom! Be careful! You might kill him! Oh, Mark!"

"Look out, Mom! Get away! I'm all right! Get away!"

Mrs. Rader, kimona about her, came to the door of Don's room.

"What on earth is going on out there?" she

asked, greatly concerned, "I never heard anything like it!"

"Some man who's let booze get the best of him," explained Mr. Rader, "Don says it's Mr. Whipple. He knows his boy."

"Here's the police!" cried a tenant, looking down in the court. "Right up here, officer!"

Finger and arms pointed at the guilty apartment. The policeman disappeared from the court after locating the scene of the disturbance.

"I'll fix you! . . . I'll fix you!" boomed the voice, and it sounded as though the fight was being waged from room to room. Suddenly, just as the doorbell of the Whipple apartment commenced ringing urgently, there was a scream followed by a heavy crash and then . . . stillness.

"There! Somebody's been killed!" said the hysterical woman tenant below, as she leaned from her window.

"Oh, Mark!" came Mrs. Whipple's sobbing voice.

"I feel dreadfully sorry for her," sympathized Mrs. Rader.

"Have you ever met her, mother?" Don asked.

"I passed her in the hall once," Mrs. Rader replied, "She looked like a sweet little woman

. . . but I remember thinking then . . . what a sad face!"

"Is it any wonder?" Mr. Rader wanted to know.

"Her son, Mark's, got some good stuff in him," defended Don.

The ringing of the doorbell persisted.

"They're not going to answer!" guessed a hushed voice.

"Better open that door up there," advised a brazen tenant, "That's an officer!"

"I wonder what's happened to Mr. Whipple?" speculated Mr. Rader. "Was he knocked out?"

"Listen!" Mrs. Rader caught his arm.

"What's going on in here?" The rasping voice of the policeman!

"They're going to get it now!" predicted a tenant, gleefully.

But voices were lowered and the satisfaction the tenants were seeking was denied.

"Well, I guess that's over," decided Mr. Rader, preparing to withdraw.

Don lifted his hand. The officer was leaving and his voice had raised somewhat.

"All right, bud. But this is the third time this place has been reported and the next time we run the old man in, see? Now do you want me to send up a doctor?"

There was a pause.

"No, sir, I guess not. Thanks."

"Better have somebody look at your mother's jaw. It may be broken."

"Well, I . . . she says she'd rather wait till morning."

The voices were not overly loud but Don, straining, heard them. He turned, reaching for his clothes.

"What are you up to?" demanded Dad Rader, suspiciously.

"I'm going over there a minute," announced Don, "And see if there's anything I can do."

"Don Rader, you're not going to do any such thing!" refused Mrs. Rader, very much perturbed, "Why, the idea! We're not going to be mixed up in this affair!"

"But, mother!" pleaded Don, "I'm needed. Mrs. Whipple's hurt. She won't have a doctor. It's not hard to guess why . . . You said yourself you were sorry for her. If I could be some help . . ."

Don grasped his mother's arm appealingly.

"Let the boy go," counseled Dad Rader, "I don't see what harm it can do."

Don opened the outer door and looked into the hall as the officer went down the stairs. He stepped out quickly and noiselessly, catching

Mark's attention as he was closing the door.

"Say, Mark," called Don, softly, "I've got a first aid kit. Could I do something for your mother?"

There was a moment's hesitation, then the door swung open wider.

"Well, y-e-s, you might," the fellow next door answered, backwardly, "But I . . . I hate to trouble you."

"No trouble at all," Don assured, "Hold the door, will you? I'll be right back with the kit."

Don returned to his hallway, picked up the kit and hurried over to the Whipple apartment. The leader of the gang admitted him cautiously, stopping him inside the door.

"Listen," he said, "I've knocked the boss cold. He's in a stupor, too, I guess. But he gave Mom an awful wallop before I could stop him. I'm worried about her. The copper says her jaw may be busted. It's sure swelling, anyhow . . ."

"I'll soon tell you," replied Don, quietly, "I helped set a broken jaw for a fellow once."

"That so?" Mark looked nervously down the hall. "I don't know what Mom will say to my bringing you in. You see the boss won't allow anybody in . . . not even delivery men! And if he ever caught you . . . !

But he don't need to know about this. He's dead to the world."

Mark took Don's arm and led him down the hall into a barely furnished living room which had been turned topsy-turvy. He started at the sight of Mr. Whipple, lying in a corner, sprawled where he had fallen. The father's head had been pillowed and his collar loosened. Aside from that he had apparently not been touched. He was breathing heavily.

"In here!" directed Mark, paying scant attention to his parent, and led Mark into the next room, a littered bed chamber.

A little woman, sobbing and moaning, lay across the bed.

Mark went over to her, sat down, and took her hand.

"Don't cry, Mom! . . . How's your jaw feel? . . . Listen, Mom. You know that fellow I told you about . . . that Boy Scout?"

Mrs. Whipple raised up a mite and looked around, starting at sight of Don.

"Oh!"

"That's all right, Mom," reassured Mark, "He's a friend. He knows about doctoring. Let him look at your face."

Don seated himself on the edge of the bed and Mrs. Whipple raised herself up slowly, be-

ing tenderly supported by Mark. Don's first studied glance disclosed badly bruised lips, puffed and swollen from having been split open. They were bleeding freely. The jaw, from the point of the chin and along the right side was swelling.

"Can you open your mouth?" Don asked of Mrs. Whipple.

She nodded, answering him between her teeth.

"Yes, but it hurts."

"Sure it does. It's bound to," replied Don, gently, "But let's see you try it. How far . . . ?"

Mrs. Whipple complied, slowly, groaning as she did so.

"There, that's fine!" said Don, examining the inside of the mouth. He found the skin surface broken opposite the teeth on the right side but the teeth were intact and Don was certain that the jaw itself was not broken.

"Just a bad bruise," he told Mrs. Whipple, who was gazing at him with fear-whitened eyes. "You'll be all right in a day or so. Now, if you'll let me, I'll just touch these cuts with iodine to keep out infection."

Don repaired to his first aid kit for sterile gauze and iodine with which to bind up the injured jaw.

"Got any peroxide in the house?" he asked of Mark.

"Have we, Mom?" queried the leader of the gang, uncertainly.

Mrs. Whipple nodded, pointing to the bath room.

"Good," responded Don, "I'll mix you up a solution to use as a mouth wash. Then rinse your mouth out with cold water. And Mark, if you'll crack some ice while I'm treating these wounds, I'll make a cold compress to put against her face and take down the swelling."

Mark hastened to the kitchen to follow out his instructions. As he did so the unconscious Mr. Whipple, in the next room, groaned heavily, causing Mrs. Whipple to start violently. She caught Don's arm with a look of apprehension. Mark hurried back down the hall and took a look at his father.

"It's all right, Mom," he reassured.

"He's terrible when he gets these drunk spells," Mrs. Whipple whispered to Don. "I —I'm afraid to have anybody in."

Don continued working as though he had not heard her, Mark returning meanwhile with the ice in a basin.

"A couple towels," Don ordered.

They were secured and ice packs were readily made. Don then prepared the mouth wash and,

this done, announced to Mrs. Whipple that she was "all fixed up."

"It'll be lots better by morning," he reassured, smiling, "Well . . . good night!"

"Good night," returned Mrs. Whipple, speaking with difficulty, then, appealingly to her son, "Thank him for me, Mark."

The leader of the gang nodded, putting his hand on Don's shoulder. The two of them left the room. As they entered the living room, Don glanced again at the outstretched Mr. Whipple.

"If you don't mind," he said to Mark, "I'd like to have a look at your father."

"Go ahead."

Don went over at once and knelt down, placing a hand on Mr. Whipple's forehead and feeling his pulse. His face was flushed and feverish. He breathed with deep indrawings through the mouth. There was a lump on his head where he had either been struck or injured himself in falling, but Don was sure this bruise was only superficial. Mr. Whipple was, as Mark had said, in a drunken stupor.

In the moment by Mr. Whipple's side Don was gripped by strangely forceful thoughts. Here was the trouble-creased face of a man with evidences of refinement in it. Dissipation, for the time being, had crowded a better char-

acter into the background. And, as if divining Don's thoughts, Mark spoke up.

"He'll sleep that way all night. He always does. And when he wakes up you wouldn't know he was the same person."

"What's your Dad's business?" Don asked, and regretted the question at once when he noticed Mark's embarrassment in answering.

"He . . . er . . . travels," Mark replied, after a pause. And Don let it go at that.

At the door the leader of the gang held out his hand.

"You're more than rubbing it in," he said, feelingly, "But you're doing it in a nice way. This makes a couple of scores I've got to settle with you."

Don smiled.

"Any time!" he invited, "And if I can do anything more for your mother . . ."

"Thanks. I'll let you know. You've sure done plenty!"

But Don himself didn't think so. He had simply availed himself of an opportunity to do a Good Turn. And now to bed and a few hours' sleep for all indications pointed to the morrow, with its reception to Charles A. Lindbergh, as being one of the wildest days in New York City's history!

CHAPTER VII

IN SIGHT OF LINDY

"THINK your leg will hold up?" asked Ozzie, anxiously, as Don joined him, Monday morning, on the apartment house steps, still limping from his knee injury.

"It's got to," declared Don, grinning, "It's lots better. See—I can bend it, now. I couldn't do that when we got back Saturday."

"Yes, but being on it all day today isn't going to help much," suggested Ozzie.

"It isn't going to hurt, either, if I'm thinking of Lindbergh all the time," was Don's unreturnable answer.

The atmosphere on the street was already that of a national holiday. Flags and buntings were everywhere and scores of families, within sight, were on their way downtown to gain vantage points from which to catch a glimpse of the world's hero. Street venders were realizing an early morning profit on the sale of toy airplanes and "Lucky Lindy" buttons. Faces turned expectantly toward the sky at the slightest sound or indication.

"He's due at the Battery now," the boys heard some passerby say.

"Great day for it," another remarked.

"This is going to be real sport," enthused Ozzie, "Aren't you glad now you're in New York?"

Don smiled. "You bet! Today, anyway!"

There was a roar which reverberated between the apartment houses as Don and Ozzie turned onto Fort Washington street—a formation of army planes going over, following the course of the Hudson down to the Battery!

"Boy, don't they look pretty up there?"

The new member of Troop 36 had not lived in a part of the country where the sight of planes in formation was common.

"The sky'll be alive with 'em in another hour," Ozzie predicted. "Oh, say, Don," he suddenly recalled, "What did you think of the pitched battle last night? Wasn't that a peach? I told you those Whipples had some hot ones!"

Don nodded, with a curious side-glance at Ozzie.

"Yeah, it's too bad."

"I'll say so—too bad for the folks that live on the same court. My Dad's going down today and complain. Everybody's raising a howl. I guess those Whipples won't be around here much longer."

"Perhaps not," admitted Don, slowly.

"And I sure won't be sorry," continued Ozzie, "That bird Mark'll be a good riddance!"

"Oh, I don't know! You know what I've been thinking, Ozzie? I've been thinking Mark might have the makings of a darn good scout!"

"What?" Ozzie stopped dead still and stared at Don unbelievingly. The two were half a block from the school where most of the troop was already gathered. "You're kidding! Why, Mark—he—he's nothing but a *Mud Gutter!*

Don's eyes blazed.

"Well, what of it? What kept us from being in *his* shoes? Good fortune! We've nothing to take particular credit for."

"But just the same," argued Ozzie, "He's not in our class. He just doesn't belong, that's all. The guys wouldn't stand for him!"

"Oh, is that so?" rejoined Don, "Well, I don't believe it. Anyhow, I'm going to find out. I'm going to see whether the fellows in this troop are clannish or whether it's . . . just *you!*"

"Say, how do you get that way?" snapped Ozzie, "You've got a lot of nerve, you have! New in the troop and all that and wanting to propose a bird like Whipple for membership! Try it and see how far you get!"

"Now that you put it that way, I *will*," replied Don, quietly, "I hadn't intended to at the start, I just said to you I thought Mark had the makings of a good scout. I could see where the training might do a lot for him. But now I can see where *he* might do a lot for us!"

"Razzberries!" retorted Ozzie, hotly.

And there the matter was forced to rest for the two had reached the schoolhouse corner and their thoughts of duty took quick precedence over all else.

All up the long line of march from the Battery to Central Park a tremendous crowd had stood for hours, rising from heel to tiptoe at the faintest suggestion of the parade's approach. False alarms had been many and the greatest throng in the history of New York's streets, was growing impatient, especially those along upper Fifth Avenue, far removed from the scene of Lindy's arrival. These thousands knew that, if the parade had not as yet begun to pass them, there would still be an hour or more of waiting. And an hour or more, after one has remained so tightly packed as to be unable to change the position of one's feet, could be looked forward to only in terms of torture.

"I don't see how Lindy ever stood it," said

one weary woman, "Just think of his sitting there, cramped in that little seat, for over thirty-three hours! And here I'm almost dead from just standing *three*!"

But, presently, in the distance, came the first strains of a band. A cheer went up. Tired faces lost their droop, aching shoulders straightened, necks stiff from looking upwards somehow lost their kinks. Lindbergh was coming! Still far away, no doubt, but *coming!* Every one of the millions, watching from every possible toe or finger hold, was intimately acquainted with every move that Lindy had to make. They knew, for instance, that he would first have to lend himself to an initial ovation in New York harbor when he would be escorted to the Battery by a marine parade. They couldn't know, however, unless they were among that portion of the crowd, of how supremely insane that moment was to be! Of the sky belching noise, buildings rocking under the weight of thousands hanging from windows and packing roofs, the harbor a mass of madly screaming boats, New York's skyline lost in a paper snowstorm, the world gone bug house—those within sight, following with smarting eyes and tingling throats, the slim, valiant figure of a boy who stood upon the bridge of the mayor's yacht, his own eyes smarting, no doubt, as he

looked soberly from side to side at the maddest scene ever taken place in New York harbor. The spectacle of a life time! A glimpse at perhaps the greatest individual home-coming event ever witnessed! Oh, the noise! All Manhattan Island must be hearing it! The bells, sirens, airplane motors, cannons, whistles, yells and shrieks! Clang! Toot! Ding! Bang! Boom! Zizz! Whir! Wheeeee! LINDY!

"Lindy's coming!"

The cry was passed along the street, up Broadway, where the first part of the parade was now in motion, bands playing, colors flying, soldiers marching—a military parade in appearance only, not in spirit. An unrivalled demonstration of peace-time enthusiasm. And to think that all this acclaim was being made over one, lone person! A tribute to the achievement of an American youth!

"Lindy's coming!"

The shout reached the reviewing stand at City Hall and the thousands there, packed solid from curbstone to building front, surged into the street with a tumultous roar. Showers of paper came streaming down. Police reserves battled desperately to push back the human tide and permit the passing parade to continue. Mounted troopers drove their horses into the crowd, the animals rising on haunches time

after time, and towering over the heads of struggling spectators reluctant to give up positions which they had squirmed, pushed and jostled hours to attain.

"Lindy's coming!"

It was as though someone had pressed an electric button closing a circuit running up Broadway from the Battery to City Hall and on to Fifth Avenue, along this most majestic of streets to Central Park where Governor Alfred E. Smith of the State of New York was waiting in the presence of some two hundred thousand to do the splendid young birdman final honor at the end of his triumphal march.

"Lindy's coming!" A word of mouth message which traveled with the speed of lightning and left a thunderous outburst in its wake!

The members of Boy Scout Troop 36, on duty between Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth Streets, Fifth Avenue, heard the cry and braced to meet the reaction from it. The wait had been a long and arduous one. It was now well after two o'clock, the time that Lindbergh should have reached Central Park and the procession preceding him had been passing for more than half an hour. Bands! Bands! And more bands! Famous war units back in uniform again. Everybody happy! Everybody thrilled! Hats off and quick, proud salutes as the colors

passed! Oh, this was a day and an occasion to remember as long as one lived! What did a little thing like hunger or thirst or weariness from standing matter? Hadn't Lindy flown across the ocean on a couple of sandwiches and endured incomparable physical hardships? Brace up, everybody! Where was that spirit that had lifted the world out of itself? Sure, you had it! That eternal something that recognizes no obstacles, to which discouragement is a stranger, that sees only the Paris of its dreams and, counting not the cost, takes off in soulward flight, persisting dauntlessly until the objective is reached!

"LINDY!"

The world's hero because, with simple courage and becoming modesty, he had set himself a task and had followed it through to perfect accomplishment.

To Scout Don Rader, still a tenderfoot to the ways of New York, the whole occasion was awesomely overwhelming. The crowd alone was sufficiently impressive when one considered that the whole town of Traverse City, numbering more than ten thousand, was contained in the single block where he stood guard! Every window ledge jammed, some of the more adventurous sitting with their legs dangling out! Tops of the buildings a wall of faces, looking

down. White specks of handkerchiefs waving. Clouds of paper shooting spasmodically from windows, spreading over the marchers, dabbing uniforms and hats with touches of white. This but a meagre sample of what might be expected at the moment of Lindy's passing! Fifth Avenue, up and down, as far as the eye could see, a lane of human ants, crawling, climbing, clinging, swarming over everything, high and low!

"What a sight!" Don exclaimed to himself, repeatedly, "What a sight! I wish the fellows at home could see this!"

It was a thrill, too, to observe with what respect the Scouts were treated. Bystanders responded readily to their orders save in a few instances. In one of these a woman had tried to cross the street after the parade had started passing. Don stepped in front of her.

"I'm sorry, Ma'am, but you can't cross the Avenue now," he said, politely but firmly.

"I'll do as I please, young sir!" the woman responded, irritably, and attempted to go around him. Don again obstructed her way.

"Don't you suppose, ma'am, we're all a bit tired?" he asked, and smiled.

The woman looked at him, hesitated, then with a toss of the head, returned to the curb.

At another time a little girl who had gotten separated from her mother was turned over to

Don and he had taken her out in the street so that the frantic parent could catch sight of her daughter and come and claim her. Every scout had been kept busy rendering, as Lump said afterwards, "Enough good turns to last for weeks!" But it was a great feeling to know that you could be of service to people!

At about a quarter to three o'clock, Sly, standing on Don's left, both boys being stationed on the east side of the Avenue, turned to Don with the exclamation: "Listen to 'em cheer down there! Oh, boy—look at the paper fly! He's coming now for sure!"

Don followed Sly's direction eagerly. Yes, sir! Lindy was only about four blocks away . . . down about opposite Forty-second Street and the Public Library. The crowd picked up the sounds a few seconds later and hundreds leaned precariously out of windows as those on the sidewalks pushed out for a better view.

"Back, please!" called the scouts, "Back! Back!"

Police officers reinforced their commands.

"Give everybody a chance!" bawled a husky patrolman, "You can all see if you just hold still!"

But all couldn't see, that was just the trouble. Nature hadn't made all the same height, unfor-

tunately, so those shorter humans were compelled to keep constantly shifting positions in a frenzied endeavor to see either through or over. And so the restless backward and forward movement continued.

"There he is!"

With the world's hero but a block away, Fifth Avenue between Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth streets, had its turn to go mad. Don had just a fleeting glimpse of Lindy, hair-disheveled, earnest-faced, seated on the tonneau of the city's official car, lifting a hand now and then in what he must have recognized as a futile attempt to acknowledge the terrific homage being done him. The car itself was half buried in streamers of ticker tape and varicolored paper, much of which represented all that was left of thousands of telephone books. How business executives would rave on the morrow, with the feverish excitement over, and secretaries unable to reach important parties for want of knowing their phone numbers! But, oh well—today was today—and today only happened once!

The official car, bearing the distinguished citizen, characterized by the press as "America's world ambassador," was forced to travel slowly, so warmly and so forcefully was it greeted.

"YEA, LINDY!" rocketed the cry, all thoughts of discomfort and waiting being thrown in the discard now. Men and women with small children lifted their offspring high over their heads.

"See him!" they shouted, frenziedly, bent on telling their children in later years the significance of an event which they could not now understand.

Don, pressing back hard against the crowd, with a storm of paper descending upon him, was kept so busy that, for an instant, he feared Lindy would pass within a few feet of him without his catching a close-up glimpse.

And then . . . just as the official car drew opposite, Don—eyes on Lindy—saw the world's hero look up to his left and start. At the same moment several women spectators screamed.

"Oooooh! Look out!"

Following Lindy's glance, Don stiffened. The body of a man, who had evidently toppled from an upper story window, was falling toward the sidewalk. Those below made a panic-stricken effort to get out from under which resulted in spectators dashing into the street, halting the procession. The man, meanwhile, had brought a gasp from horrified lookers-on, by striking crosswise of a projecting flag pole, three stories

from the street. The staff, a staunch one, momentarily broke his fall, so that he swung there sickeningly.

The situation was paralyzing. And, beyond the rush to escape from the immediate vicinity of a likely fatality, no one gave a thought as to the possible aid of the victim. No one, that is, with the exception of a boy who was new to New York and its ways, and new to the troop he was serving.

But Don, with his trained sense of observation, had detected one slight hope of rescue, could it be effected in time.

"The awning!" he cried, "If I can let it down . . . !"

Racing across the street, with the man swaying precariously overhead and the crowd in a turmoil, Don fought his way to the awning shaft and commenced turning the crank. Above, the man, hanging by his hands, desperately strove to get astride the pole but had not the strength to pull himself up. A scream arose as he lost his grip and let go. Many looked away, white-lipped.

Just at that moment, however, the awning beneath suddenly ballooned out. Turning over twice, the man struck on his back, bouncing off the awning to alight on the shoulders of spectators whom he carried, with him, to the sidewalk.

Don was at the man's side in an instant and found him to be suffering from minor bruises and shock while the spectators he had landed upon were unhurt. Scoutmaster Wheeler and other scouts then arrived on the scene with camera men who had followed the Lindbergh car, eager to snap pictures of the principals in this near tragedy.

A relieved cheer went up at the man's miraculous escape from death and a mightier cheer for the scout whose quick thinking and acting had saved him.

Assured that the man was in no critical condition and that he would be well cared for, Don —in the excitement of the moment and denseness of the crowd was able to slip back, practically unnoticed, to his old post across the street.

The parade, with police restoring order, moved on, the official car getting under way.

It was then that a flush-faced scout, standing at attention, beheld the close-up view he had long desired of the hero of the hour. He beheld more than this for, as Lindy passed he leaned forward and, with eyes unmistakably upon Don, flashed the famous Lindy smile, extending to the hero of the moment—*his* salute!

CHAPTER VIII

DON PROPOSES A NEW MEMBER

"Here, Don," said Scoutmaster Wheeler, with the parade over and the crowd dispersing, "Here's the card of the man you saved. He made me promise I'd give it to you and send you over to see him."

The new member of Troop 36 took the small pasteboard embarrassedly and looked down at the name engraved upon it. "Morton P. Mackay," he read, "Architect."

"And one of the biggest in the country," added the Scoutmaster, for Don's information, "Now you can understand why the reporters and camera men made such a fuss over you."

"It's your own fault," kidded Lump, "If you didn't like having your picture taken. You should have let me posed for you!"

Don grinned at this.

"Well, I suppose it couldn't be helped," he said, "But, gee, I'd rather . . . !"

Scoutmaster Wheeler patted him on the shoulder.

"It's all right, Don. We know how you

feel about it. But you didn't seek out recognition and . . ."

"No," broke in Sly, "If Lindy hadn't given him that salute those newspaper guys would never have spotted him!"

"Sometimes, though," continued the Scoutmaster, as if Sly had not interrupted, "Publicity of this sort does good to scouting. It gives folks on the outside a better idea of what scout training really does for a fellow. There were many others in that crowd who should have thought to do something, but they didn't. And what's the answer? They hadn't been trained to think in an emergency."

"And maybe they didn't notice the awning," suggested Bean, "I know all I could see was that bird dangling on the flag pole and the only thing I could think of was how to set broken bones!"

The scouts laughed.

"I could think of a dozen good ways to keep him from falling in the first place," confessed Art, "How about you, Ozzie?"

"I was down near the other end of the block," answered the fellow who had taken issue with Don about the gang leader, "So I really wasn't in on what happened."

There was something about Ozzie's manner

which seemed a bit grudging and several scouts studied him queerly.

"If I were you, Don," suggested the Scoutmaster, "I'd call on Mr. Mackay now, while you're so close by. We'll either wait for you, if you like, or trot on home."

Don hesitated.

"Well, I suppose if I've got to do it, I've got to do it," he decided, reluctantly, "You can wait for me if you want to. I'll only be gone a minute!"

There was one place on Fifth Avenue in which a spirit of excitement prevailed long after the frenzied passing of Charles A. Lindbergh. And just when it seemed that the offices of Morton P. Mackay would be restored to something approaching normalcy, associates and friends were sent buzzing all over again by the apologetic appearance of a youth in a Boy Scouts' uniform.

"Mr. Mackay?" said the girl at the information desk, "Yes, sir—you may go right in!"

Edwin Riley, one of Mr. Mackay's associates had just been joking with the chief over the matter which might easily have had fatal consequences.

"See here, Mort!" he joshed, "Didn't you

know better than to make that drop without a parachute?"

"Apparently not," Mr. Mackay agreed, smiling.

"Chances are you felt a bit *flighty* at sight of Lindbergh," continued Mr. Riley, "But, seriously, Mort, how the devil do you account for your fall?"

"Well," explained the architect. "I was sitting on the window sill leaning heavily on one hand and when Lindy came along I leaned still further, my hand slipped off the sill, and the next thing I knew I was in the air."

A rap sounded on the door marked "Private."

"Come in!" called Mr. Mackay.

The door swung open and, at sight of the figure in the doorway Mr. Mackay sprang to his feet and hurried across the room, hands extended.

"This is Scout Rader, isn't it?" he exclaimed, embracing Don, "My boy—I don't know how to thank you! There isn't any real way to do that. But I did want to see you and have a little talk with you."

The architect led inside a bashful youth whose every move was being watched from the hall outside the door by a curious and admiring office force.

"Ed, I want you to meet the boy who saved my life," he introduced, "Scout Rader, this is my associate, Mr. Riley . . . Mr. Riley, Scout Rader."

"Very proud to meet you," assured Mr. Riley, "I saw your act from the window and I want to tell you, sir, that's the finest executed piece of emergency work I've ever witnessed!"

Don felt his face coloring.

"It wasn't so hard," he explained, modestly, "All I had to do was let down the awning."

A round of well meant laughter caused Don to glance around, self-consciously, at the group in the door.

"Of course the only thing I was afraid of was people getting in my way," he hastened to add, thinking that he had said something amiss, "But most of them cleared out of their own accord. And then . . . well . . ." Here Don turned to Mr. Mackay. "You held on just long enough, sir, to give me time to get the awning down!"

Mr. Mackay and Mr. Riley exchanged amused glances.

"My boy," said Mr. Mackay, "It's fine to hear you tell it but I can't be taking any of the credit away from you. I'd have let go that flag pole when I did whether an awning had been under me or not because I'd held on

as long as I humanly could. And when I dropped that last distance, I was certain it was all over. So your getting to that awning and getting it down as speedily as you did . . . well, there's just no argument!"

"I—I'm sure glad eveything worked out all right, sir," said Don, awkwardly. Then, with a curious glance toward the windows, "Let's see, which window was it that you tumbled from?"

"Right here!" Mr. Mackay moved with Don to the window and had him look out.

"Whew!" exclaimed Don, drawing in his breath, "That's a way down, isn't it?"

"Six stories," responded Mr. Mackay.

"No thank you!" said Don, and laughed.

"I'm cured myself," replied the architect, winking at Mr. Riley who excused himself and went out, closing the door.

"Now, Rader," said Mr. Mackay, turning to Don and placing a hand on his shoulder, "I want to do something for you . . . some little token of my appreciation. I know you'd rather not take anything but it'll make me feel mighty good to be giving you something."

"I'm sorry, sir," begged Don, backing away, "I know how you feel. But you shouldn't feel that way, sir, because you see I was just doing my duty. And a scout never takes any kind of

pay for that. If he did he'd violate a scout law.

Mr. Mackay looked puzzled for a moment.

"Yes, I know but . . but . . ." he replied, "I . . . er . . . well, I *must* do something, Rader. My life is naturally very dear to me and the deed you have done in saving it is something that I can never actually repay. But I certainly can make some retribution and I intend to."

Don felt himself to be in a very difficult position.

"If you please, sir, I thank you very much but I couldn't accept anything from you."

"Not in public, of course," insisted Mr. Mackay, "But, privately. Only you and I need know about it. Certainly no one could object . . ."

"It would be breaking a Scout Law just the same," declared Don, firmly, "I wouldn't be playing true to myself."

The well known architect arose and paced to the window and back, agitated and perplexed.

"Extraordinary!" he finally exclaimed, "I'll have to look into this organization of yours more fully. There must be *some* way. I'll see the scout officials. I'll arrange it. When I set out to do a thing, young man, I do it!"

The new member of Troop 36 smiled.

"I'm sorry, sir . . . but here's one time when you're going to be stumped!"

But Mr. Mackay was not so sure.

"We'll see about that!" he replied, "Meanwhile, Mr. Rader, would it be against any rules for you to visit me at my summer cottage in Westchester county? I take it for granted that you're interested in the out-of-doors?"

"You bet!" Don rejoined, eyes gleaming.

"Fine! Then what do you say to dropping in on me at Woodhaven Lodge and I'll show you one of the wildest, most beautiful pieces of country in this state!"

"Gee, sir, that would be great!" cried Don, enthused.

"All right. Let's see . . . I'm going to be busy this week-end, but how about the following Saturday?"

"Okay with me," replied Don, "But I wouldn't want to be interfering with . . ."

"Not at all!" interjected Mr. Mackay, "Get that idea out of your head, young man. We need some young blood out at Woodhaven occasionally. Besides, I want Mrs. Mackay to meet the person who kept her from being made a widow!"

Don smiled. There was a breezy, unaffected manner about the architect which he liked. One could tell that Mr. Mackay must be barrels of

fun! A man who could recover so quickly from a most harrowing experience just couldn't take himself too seriously.

"A week from Saturday's a date, then," announced Mr. Mackay, making a note on his desk calendar, "The lodge is near Redcliffe-on-the-Hudson. By near it, I mean three and a half miles. But you don't have to worry about that. All you do is take the New York Central train at nine in the morning and I'll be at the Redcliffe station to meet you in my car. That fair enough?"

"Why . . . yes, sir . . . but I'd just as soon hike up from the station," proposed Don, "There's no need of your going to the trouble to come in for me."

"I'll have to come in anyway," insisted Mr. Mackay, "Besides, the trail to my lodge isn't any too well blazed."

Don was keenly interested now.

"That would make it all the better!" he declared.

But the architect, chuckling at Don's eagerness, shook his head.

"No, Rader, I'll meet you. There'll be plenty of opportunity for you to practice trailing and tracking, after we get to the lodge. You're going up into the woods and mountains, man! Why, last fall a big bear walked across my

front porch! And it's nothing to have deer come up and sniff the place over!"

Don's eyes widened. Here was a country which carried the native appeal he had always felt for the wilds of Michigan! And only a short train ride from the greatest city in America.

"There's only one other cottage within miles of me," continued Mr. Mackay, noting Don's intense interest, "And that's owned by a very close friend of mine—Judge J. Frank Latham. Ever hear of him?"

Don looked vague. "I—don't believe so."

"Most famous criminal court judge in the country," identified Mr. Mackay, "He's the man that sent that McClellan gang to the pen for life!"

"Oh!" said Don, "Sure I've heard of him!"

"Now have you your directions straight?" questioned Mr. Mackay.

"Week from Saturday," repeated Don, "New York Central, nine o'clock, get off at Redcliffe-on-the-Hudson stop. You'll be at station."

"Check!" smiled the architect, "And don't think I won't be tickled to see you!"

"I'll be tickled to come!" assured Don.

Mr. Mackay extended his hand.

"Until I see you again," he said, "Which

reminds me, I was supposed to have attended to something about the Woodhaven Lodge today. Let's see . . . what was it? . . . My stars—*the new awnings!*"

By the time Scout Don Rader had returned to his apartment house, late afternoon editions of New York papers were on the streets with front page stories of the most exciting incident along the Lindbergh line of march. A Boy Scout sharing news prominence with the Lone Eagle of the skies! Some of the papers carried Don's picture together with a picture of Mr. Mackay and these, coupled with the glaring headlines, gave Don a queer sensation.

"'M. P. Mackay, Famous Architect, Falls Six Stories,'" Don read, "'Saved By Quick Thinking of Boy Scout'. 'Accident Occurs During Lindbergh Parade' 'Crowd in Panic as Boy Lowers Awning' . . ." These were mild samples. As Don read on he was shocked to see how the deed, in his estimation, had been magnified beyond all proportions.

SCOUT DROPS AWNING
SAVES ARCHITECT'S LIFE

Scout Donald Rader of Troop 36 Then
Wins Salute of Lindy Who Sees Act

SCOUT MODEST OVER FEAT
TRIES TO HIDE IDENTITY

"Oh, for Pete's sake!" groaned Don, "Why, I didn't do so much! They shouldn't have played it up like that."

The thought of all this publicity made the new member of Troop 36 so self-conscious that he actually watched his chance to sneak into the apartment house when none of the tenants or fellows were out in front, fearing to be questioned and lionized.

But the following morning Mark Whipple cornered him, grinning broadly as he did so.

"Well, I see you busted into print!" greeted the gang leader, "Great stuff! That's using the old bean!"

Don smiled.

"Bet it gave you a thrill when Lindy saluted?"

The new member of Troop 36 nodded.

"It sure did," he admitted.

The gang leader looked at Scout Rader with a trace of envy.

"Wouldn't I have liked to been you!" he whistled.

"How's your mother?" Don asked, giving a sudden deft turn to the conversation.

"Oh, Mom's lots better," Mark hastened to assure, "I kept the ice packs on for a couple of hours and they took the swelling down. She told me to tell you thanks again . . ."

"That's all right," answered Don, struck with a certain notion. "Say, Mark, I've been thinking. I know you've sort of been against us and I don't blame you, in some ways. But would you get sore if I asked you . . . right out . . . whether you'd consider being a scout?"

"*What?*" The gang leader looked his complete astonishment.

"I mean it," insisted Don, "You'd have to make application, of course, but I'd like permission to propose your name."

Mark laughed, disclosing an element of feeling.

"Me? . . . Say, you fellows surely don't want *me!*"

"There's where you're wrong. We do!"

"But I don't fit in. I'm not you guys' style. That lets me out."

"Will you let me put your name up?" Don persisted.

The gang leader could not conceal a pleased expression.

"What would I have to do to belong?" he asked.

"Well in the first place, you'd have to be at least twelve years of age," declared Don eagerly.

"Pass," grinned the gang leader.

"And then you'd have to know the Scout Oath and Law by heart!"

"Ouch!"

"That's nothing to holler about," joshed Don, "Shucks, that's easy! The tough part is living up to it."

"Yeah, and what's *my* bunch going to say?" demanded Mark.

"What do *you* care?" Don rejoined. "Do you think we scouts have worried our heads about what you fellows have said about us?"

Mark grinned, a bit sheepishly.

"All right, put my name up if you want to. I'm not saying whether I'd join or not but I'd like to see for sure if the rest of you birds would have me!"

That evening, Tuesday, was regular meeting night for Troop 36. And Scout Don Rader made it a special point to be ten minutes early in the hopes of catching Scoutmaster Wheeler alone. In this he was successful, the Scoutmaster and himself arriving at the gym together.

"Well, Don, how's the boy?"

"I'm fine, sir."

"No ill effects after putting down that awning?"

Don grinned. "Not any except folks talking to me about it."

"Got to expect that," smiled the Scoutmaster, "It'll wear off, though. Just be thankful you're not Lindbergh!"

The new member of Troop 36 nodded, and laughed.

"Mr. Wheeler," he said, sobering, "I came early to see you about something . . ."

"Yes, sir, and I'll bet I know what it is," guessed the Scoutmaster, tongue in his cheek.

Don looked his surprise.

"What sir?"

"Your application for Eagle. I was going to speak to you about it tonight myself. I didn't want to make it out for you until I'd come to know you better, Don. That's why I put you off. Come in and we'll. . . ."

"I'm sorry, sir," broke in Don, apologetically, "I appreciate it but that's not what I wanted to see you about."

It was Scoutmaster Wheeler's turn to be astonished. He was also a bit hurt that he had jumped at conclusions.

"Pardon me, Don. *I'm* sorry. What is it? What can I do for you?"

The new member of Troop 36 hesitated, acting as though he scarcely knew how to begin.

"Well, I . . . it probably seems like . . . I don't know whether being in the Troop such a short time . . . but anyhow,

I wanted to find out if there'd be any objections to a fellow I'd like to see become a Scout?"

"Can't tell you till you name him," said the Scoutmaster, "Who is he?"

"He's one of the guys we pulled from the river," answered Don, "Mark Whipple!"

The Scoutmaster's eyes narrowed.

"Whipple! Isn't he leader of the gang?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pretty bad actor, that fellow. I've had reports on him. But that doesn't necessarily mean anything. That gang's been against us, though, from the start. You probably couldn't get next to Whipple with a ten foot pole."

"I think you could, sir," declared Don, "I sounded him out today and I can tell he's leaning our way. I've a hunch he'd come in if the Troop would have him."

"There's the rub," said Scoutmaster Wheeler frankly, "You see, Don, the fellows have worked hard to build up a high standard in this Troop and they naturally feel pretty particular about the kind of timber they take in. It's not because they want to be snobbish or high hat but they've developed a Troop tradition they believe they've a right to protect."

"I see," said Don, unable to conceal his disappointment, "Seems kind of too bad, though, that a fellow who's got so much good stuff in

him couldn't have one chance to bring it out."

"Wait a minute!" commanded the Scoutmaster, "I'm not saying this can't be done. In fact I think it would be a mighty fine thing. But the fellows will have to be made to see it in the same light. They'd have to take this Whipple in as a problem boy and run the risk of his working out all right. The only thing I can do is put the question up to them and see what they think of it."

"Would you do that?" asked Don, appealingly.

"Tonight," promised the Scoutmaster, "And now, Don, we've just time, before meeting, for me to take care of that Eagle application for you. Let's go inside."

CHAPTER IX

THE OATH OF TENDERFOOT

THE ISSUE as to whether or not Troop 36 would consider Mark Whipple as a candidate for membership was one of vital interest to Scout Don Rader. In the first place there was the memory of his clash with Ozzie Brinkman over Mark, and Ozzie's challenge for him to *try* to get the gang leader in! Well, he *was* trying and it wasn't because of a desire to down Ozzie, either, even though Ozzie had taken care to avoid him after their little run-in.

"But I sure hope the rest of the fellows aren't as set against Mark as Ozzie is," Don said to himself, "If they are, it's all off!"

Another factor which entered into Don's desire that Mark be accepted was his sensing that Mark himself doubted the Troop's passing favorably upon him.

"It would do Mark a lot of good to know that the door is open," Don thought, "And that would put the buck squarely up to him on joining!"

So, when the time came for Scoutmaster

Wheeler to present the matter, it was not surprising that Don found himself nervously on edge.

"Fellows," announced the Scoutmaster, "I'm going to ask you to do something tonight that you've never done before . . ." He paused a moment to permit the interest to become centered. "And that's to let down on the standards of membership for a new candidate!" he continued, dramatically.

There were expressions of surprise and wonderment. What in the world was Mr. Wheeler going to spring? This was something unusual.

"We've come in for a lot of criticism in the past for being so selective," said the Scoutmaster, "But we've known what we were doing and the result is we've built up a membership we're shoutin' proud of. But, fellows, the time's come when it's a question as to whether it wouldn't be darn wise to make an exception to our rule . . . an exception in favor of a fellow who used to be our enemy . . . who used to lead his gang against us . . ."

"Mark Whipple!" came a chorus of involuntary whispers.

"A fellow," went on the Scoutmaster, "Who's recently changed his ideas about scouting and who, so Don Rader tells me, is in the mood to join us if we'll take him in."

A tense silence followed as troop members looked at one another, debatingly.

"You don't have to tell me that Mark Whipple's one of the toughest birds around here," anticipated Scoutmaster Wheeler, "I *know* it. He's given us plenty of trouble and everybody else, police included. He's been two-gunned dynamite and, for all I know, he still is. But the fact remains, he's intimated that he'd like to join us and the question for us to decide is whether we're willing to play with dynamite for the good we'd have a chance of doing the neighborhood."

"What a chance!" said the voice of a scout evidently thinking out loud. F'aces turned toward Ozzie.

"But there's no doubt in my mind," emphasized the Scoutmaster, "If we could get this dynamite exploding in the right direction, we'd make a good citizen out of Tough Egg Whipple and what we'd done for him would be bound to influence his old cronies. There's the carving, fellows, laid cold turkey. What do you want to do with it?"

Another moment of silence, an awkward moment this time. Then a clearing of several throats and finally a voice, Ozzie's voice.

"Mr. Wheeler!"

"Scout Brinkman!" recognized Scoutmaster Wheeler, returning Ozzie's salute.

"I . . . er . . . I was just wondering . . . we've gotten along so fine . . . no trouble in the Troop . . . this Whipple's liable to want to run things . . ."

"All right!" rejoined the Scoutmaster, "And what are you fellows going to do? Let him get away with it or sit on him?"

"*Sit on him!*" shouted Sly, "Or else duck him! That's what I had to do when I got him in the water! He was meek enough after that!"

The scouts laughed.

"But what I mean is," Ozzie attempted to explain, his face reddening, "You can't ever tell when a guy like that's going to bust up the works."

"*Is* he?" questioned the Scoutmaster, "What's the matter, Ozzie, you afraid of him?"

Ozzie's face grew still redder.

"No, sir, but I . . ."

"But you don't think you can handle him, is that it? How many of you fellows can see this guy Whipple throwing you around?"

"No, no!" came the cry.

"Like to see him try it!" challenged Bean.

"That's the way to talk!" snapped Scout-

master Wheeler, "You know, I think you fellows need Mark Whipple in this Troop. He'll be a cracking good experiment. What do you care if he is the gang leader? All the better! It's up to you to prove to him that the Troop's bigger than he is and if you can't do that you deserve to black his shoes. How do you feel about it? Think you can put the fear of God in him?"

"YEA!"

"Let him join!"

"He won't call us mamma's boys when we get through with him!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler smiled, turning to Scout Don Rader.

"All right, Don, if you'll prepare your candidate this week we'll make a special concession in his case and take him in at the next meeting at the same time we induct two other tenderfoots!"

"Yes, sir!" saluted Don, elatedly.

Ozzie, of all the scouts, was the only one who appeared particularly downcast at the decision to open the ranks to Whipple. And he came in for some good-natured razzing about it.

"What's the rub, Ozz?" asked Lump, on the side, "You got something personal against Mark?"

"N-no," denied Ozzie, "But I don't see the

sense in inviting trouble. I think the guys are foolish to take him in. You watch, Mark won't be in long before he'll be pulling something. Chances are he'll be wanting to work some of his friends in, too, and first thing you know they'll be getting away with murder!"

But Lump was unimpressed.

"Aw, Ozzie, you're all wet!"

"Is that so! Say, I'll tell you something else! If Don Rader hadn't recommended Whipple he wouldn't have gone over. But did you ever see the beat how everybody's fallen for Don? And talk about a swelled head! After what happened yesterday he's not been on speaking terms . . . and I'm the guy who got him in here!"

Lump looked his disbelief.

"Don? Not speaking to you? What you trying to hand me?

"All right!" flashed Ozzie, "You watch and see!"

Walking over toward the fellow who had proposed Mark Whipple, Ozzie caught Don when he was momentarily alone, a puzzled Lump looking on from a distance.

"So, you think you put it over on me, do you?" Ozzie charged, in guarded tones.

"You know better than that," answered Don, shortly.

"Making a play to Mr. Wheeler!" continued Ozzie, "Pretty small stuff!"

"Aw, forget it!"

Don deliberately turned his back on his accuser and walked away. He had done this once before rather than take abuse and Ozzie had been reasonably sure that he would do it again.

"Well, smoke me for a herring!" exclaimed Lump, in astonishment, "Now, why should he be giving Ozzie the cold shoulder?"

The break between one Ozzie Brinkman and one Donald Rader was definite after that. If they passed each other on the street or in the apartment house lobby, neither spoke, and news of their falling out spread through the troop. But, by the opposite token, the friendship between Don and the new candidate for Troop 36 was developing by one lesson of instruction after another.

"I never was any good at memorizing," Mark declared more than once in his attempt to commit the Scout Oath and Law.

"Keep it up," Don encouraged, "They say anything that's hard to learn is twice as hard to forget once you've got it!"

"Here's hoping!" said the gang leader, with feeling, "Now, let's go on the laws again. 'A scout is trustworthy. A scout's honor is to be

trusted. If he were to violate his honor by telling a lie, or by cheating . . . or by . . . darn it!"

". . . not doing exactly a given task," supplied Don.

"Oh, yes," recalled Mark, "Not doing exactly . . ." and so on, through the twelve points of the Scout Law until, at their get-together the day before the meeting, Don pronounced the candidate for Tenderfoot Scout "letter perfect."

"Do you suppose, by any chance, your father could be interested in coming to the meeting?" Don ventured.

"Dad?" scoffed Mark, "Say, if Dad knew I was going in for this he'd tan the life out of me! He's against belonging to anything. Won't even let mother attend church."

Don glanced at Mark curiously. He felt that he had come to know him better. Mark was much freer in his conversation with him than formerly.

"What is the reason?" Don asked, boldly.

"Search me," replied Mark, with a shrug of the shoulders, "Dad didn't used to be this way before we came to New York. But all of a sudden he got the idea that folks were snooping into our business and he wouldn't let us have anything to do with anybody. Look at Mom.

She doesn't go any place or have any friends. She hardly goes out on the street."

"I've noticed that," answered Don, quietly. "You said your father travels?"

"That's right," replied Mark, with obvious reluctance.

"For *what?*" pressed Don.

"You've got me there!" said the gang leader, with startling frankness, "Dad never spills anything about himself and I'm not so dumb as to ask him!"

"But don't you ever wonder . . . ?" queried Don.

"Oh, I've got my own ideas," rejoined Mark, lips tightening, "Say, what you trying to do—put me through the third degree?"

Don't face colored.

"I'm sorry, Mark," he apologized, "I didn't mean to get so personal."

The gang leader smiled, reaching out a hand to slap Don's shoulder, reassuringly.

"It's all right," he said, "You're different. But I've knocked guys down already who've gotten nosey about my old man!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler always believed in making a great occasion of meetings where boys were taken in as Tenderfoots or promoted to Second or First Class Scouts. He believed

also in having the parents of boys present whenever possible, impressing upon them that when their sons graduated from one class of scouting to another it was the biggest thing that ever came into their lives outside of a school graduation.

"These badges that we pin on the boys may not mean much to you," Scoutmaster Wheeler had impressed time on time, "But they have a very real meaning to the boy for they are not being given to him . . . he has earned them and you can bet he knows their value! Many of the badges represent hours and hours of effort, of overcoming obstacles, of trying again and again, of sticking to tasks, no matter how trying, until they are accomplished! That's what your boy has done, things you folks can really never know about, except as you see what the doing of these things has done to and for him. So that's why, when I say to you that I consider these boys who are to be presented badges, to have performed a remarkable achievement, I'm not saying it to flatter them or because it sounds big. It *is* a remarkable achievement!"

In Mark Whipple's case, as in the case of all candidates desiring to become a Scout, he had been required to pass his Tenderfoot Test which, in addition to his knowledge of the Scout

Oath and Law included a knowledge of the Scout Motto, Sign, Salute and Significance of the Badge. He also had to know the history of the Flag of the United States and the proper forms of respect due it, as well as how to tie the Square Knot and eight other useful knots.

"You didn't tell me I had to know all this at the start," Mark had accused Don, during the course of instruction.

"Oh, well," his scout teacher had replied, "You couldn't have learned more than one thing at a time anyway!"

Just how much Mark Whipple, gang leader, was impressed by the ceremony inaugurating him as a Tenderfoot Scout was, of course, difficult to determine. Don watched Mark carefully throughout proceedings and noted that Mark treated everything which was said and done with great seriousness. Scoutmaster Wheeler, when it came time for the three new candidates to subscribe to the Scout Oath and Law, called the parents of those boys who were present to come forward and take the oath with them.

"There's nothing secret or binding about the Scout Oath or Law," Scoutmaster Wheeler explained, "Except as it's binding on personal conduct. But we like the parents of the boys

to stand up and repeat the words with them. If you parents don't know all the words, it makes no difference. We know, at least, that you're with us in spirit and that's the main thing."

Don, noting that Mark was the only one of the candidates not to have either mother or father present, thoughtfully stepped up and took a stand beside him. And a wave of feeling went out from him to the fellow who lacked the home conditions so many other fellows were enjoying and he heard Mark's voice, even above his own, strong and unfaltering . . . "to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

It was a great oath for any fellow to take, binding himself, on his honor, to keep. A simple enough declaration but one requiring courage and resolution to uphold. An oath linking everyone who took it to the strong men of all ages, who lived and died by codes of honor! An oath now become a part of the lives of these three new candidates who, by their adherence, would give it the power to transform and develop them as it had done to countless others!

At the conclusion Scoutmaster Wheeler said simply, "I trust you, on your honor, to keep these promises you have made. You are now

one of the greatest brotherhood of Boy Scouts."

And with that he stepped forward and extended to each, Tenderfoot Scouts Philip Barry, Joseph Duncan and Mark Whipple, the Scout left-hand clasp. The three first fingers held together, with the little finger apart, carried the meaning of the three points of the Scout Oath. And the contact of his hand with theirs indicated the bond of friendliness and worthy purpose between scouts.

Facing about, the new Scouts then saluted the Troop, a salute which the Troop returned, after which they marched back to their patrol and the ceremony was over. A few minutes later Mark Whipple and his two fellow Tenderfoots were busy shaking hands with their brother members.

The meeting between Scout Ozzie Brinkman and Tenderfoot Mark Whipple was watched with interest by the entire Troop. But, if fireworks had been expected, they certainly did not materialize. Ozzie was the first to put out his hand and Mark took it, with a broad and friendly smile.

"But Ozzie loves him like poison just the same!" whispered Lump, to Sly.

"And Mark probably thinks the same of him," returned Sly, "They never did have any use for each other."

"Well, this ought to be a pretty good place to work it out," grinned Lump.

The meeting over, Scout Don Rader and the new member he had brought into the Troop, returned to their apartment house together.

"How'd you like it?" Don could hardly wait to ask.

"Oh, fair," replied the former gang leader, "How soon can I get to be a Second Class Scout?"

Don laughed, highly pleased at Mark's reaction.

"Why, you have to be a Tenderfoot at least a month. The rest's all up to you . . . as soon as you can learn and pass your tests."

"All right, let's start in!" decided Mark. "You've got me into this, you know, and you've got to see me through whether you want to or not!"

"I'm perfectly willing," Don agreed.

"I suppose it's like anything else," reflected Mark, "More fun as you get into it. Anyhow, I'm sure going to run you ragged from now on. You don't know me yet. Whenever I go in for anything, I go in for it hard!"

CHAPTER X

A CRY FOR AID

The astounding news of their leader's having gone over to the enemy through joining the Scout ranks as a Tenderfoot was received by members of Mark Whipple's old gang and accepted with several grains of salt.

"Mark's just pulled a slicker, that's all," was Rex Eggers' opinion, "Though it's darn funny he didn't put us wise before he did it."

"Probably had a reason for not spilling it," seconded Pat Dugan, "Mark never was much on talk. But he's too fast for those boys. Chances are he's gone in to get the lay."

"Maybe that's the way he's rewarding 'em for saving his life!" suggested King Bailey, dryly, "Making 'em think he's converted when he's really laughing up his sleeve!"

"Well, anyhow, we're going to get the straight tonight," declared Rex, "He's not going to soft soap us! Or double-cross us, either!"

And when the fellow who had proven his right to boss the gang arrived at its secret

meeting place in a rock crevice by the river front, he was met with a broadside of shouts, questions and demands.

"One at a time!" ordered Mark. "Pipe down, you guys! How do you get this way?"

"Say, how do *you* get this way?" repeated Rex, "That's what WE want to know!"

"*What* way?" asked Mark, quietly.

"Joining the Scouts!"

"Well, what's the matter with that? Can't I join what I want to?"

"Not and belong to us you can't!"

"Now you said something. And that's what I came down here for tonight, to tell you birds I'm quitting!"

The new Tenderfoot minced no words, his blunt declaration cracking upon his hearers like a pistol shot.

"What's that?"

"Ha! Ha! Can't you see? He's only kiddin'!"

"Sure! Don't you know Mark?"

But the gang leader shook his head, unsmiling.

"No, guys. I mean this. I'm through."

The gang regarded their leader a moment, stunned.

"So you're gonna be a mamma's boy, eh?" stung King Bailey, who had been Mark's rival

for leadership in the gang and who now saw an opportunity to win favor. "And wear a cute little uniform and say your prayers every night and go to church every Sunday? Oh, won't that be hot?"

The gang laughed, scornfully.

"So you're turning us down!" razzed Pat Dugan, "What's biting you, Mark? Just because they pulled us from the river! Say, we might do something for them some time, but would they join us?"

"Why should they?" retorted the retiring gang leader, "What do we amount to? What have we ever done? Nothing but raise hell. And what's it gotten us? We've darn near gone to jail a dozen times. And we thought we were having a good time! Say, I could show you guys more fun tying knots than we've had wrecking boathouses!"

"Applesauce!"

"All right! Is there a rope around here? I'll prove it! I'll tie any of you guys up in one minute so tight you couldn't get away in a week!"

"Here's your rope!" supplied a gang member, reaching into the crevice.

"King!" selected Mark.

"Nothing stirring!"

"Go ahead, King!" urged Rex, pushing him

forward," "One minute! Let's call his bluff!"

The aspirant for leadership submitted reluctantly as gang members crowded about.

"Somebody time me!" called Mark.

"Don't worry!" shouted Pat.

And the Tenderfoot Scout commenced. Thanks to Don's careful instruction and hours of painstaking practice, Mark was now able to give an exhibition little short of amazing. His trussing of the rope about King was done so deftly and so quickly that gang members found themselves unable to follow the over and under and around passes, except that they could see King was rapidly being reduced to a state of complete helplessness.

"There you are!" said Mark, stepping back, with King on the ground in front of him, "What's the time?"

"Fifty-nine seconds!" announced Pat, "All right, King. Now, let's see you get out."

King, hands secured behind his back, feet tied and rope about his body, strained and tugged and wriggled and rolled. The Tenderfoot Scout sat down on a rock, meanwhile, enjoying his victim's evident discomfiture. But King persisted stubbornly. He knew it would be hailed as a great victory for him, could he get free. And because knot tying represented a knowledge Mark had gained from the Scouts,

King was even more anxious to show him up.

"One good thing about those knots," grinned Mark, after King had been struggling for fifteen minutes, "The more you try to pull out, the tighter they get!"

"This rope is cutting my wrists!" King complained.

"Give up?" asked the gang leader.

"No!" King resumed his tussle.

"Stick to her, King, we're with you!" encouraged Rex. But some of the gang members were now commencing to laugh, realizing how futile were King's efforts to escape.

"And this isn't anything to what you can do with knots," Mark added, for emphasis, "Make a rope ladder to climb the Palisades, or a bowline to lower folks from burning buildings or a lariat for lassoing. How about it, King? Had enough?"

Disgruntled and almost exhausted, King Bailey looked up, gloweringly.

"If my wrists weren't so sore," he offered, lamely.

"You're whipped, King. Might as well own up to it!" joshed Rex, "Untie him, Mark."

"When he asks me to," replied the gang leader, complacently.

Another ten minutes passed, during which time the fellow on the ground made little at-

tempt to free himself, evidently having decided that such effort was useless but loathe to admit defeat.

"All right!" he finally snapped, "Take these darn ropes off!"

The gang leader, now recently become a Tenderfoot, stooped quickly and, within equally as short a time as it had taken to bind his victim, released King, who sat up rubbing wrists made raw from straining and twisting.

"Anybody else?" grinned Mark, holding up the rope.

But there were no volunteers.

"Listen, guys!" The gang leader's face was sober. "I don't want you to think I'm throwing you over but I took a tumble to myself and when you take a tumble like I've had . . . well, you just won't get any more kick out of pulling the stuff you are getting away with now."

Mark, having commanded the gang's respect, was able to hold their attention.

"I know what you think of a guy who goes lily white," he continued, "Go ahead! Hang it on me! I used to razz guys for the same thing. But all I can say is, when you once get wise to yourselves, you'll do just what I've done, if you get the chance!"

"Like so much cheese!" sneered King.

"Give Whip a break!" supported Pat. "He might be right at that. How do we know?"

"I'm with you fellows just the same," insisted the Tenderfoot, "That is, if you still want me . . . except you can't count me in on the rough stuff."

Mark Whipple, retiring gang leader, held out his hand to the gang member nearest him and one after the other grasped it as he went the rounds, King Bailey being the only one to refuse.

The more Scout Don Rader thought about the training of his Tenderfoot charge the more he wished that Mark Whipple might be included in the call he was to make on Morton P. Mackay at Woodlawn Lodge the following Saturday.

"I could teach Mark more on a trip like that than any other way," thought Don, "I wonder if Mr. Mackay would have any objections to my bringing him along?"

Obviously the only way to find out was to ask and this Don did by medium of the telephone.

"Bring him right along!" came back Mr. Mackay's voice, cordially, "By all means! So he's a Tenderfoot, is he? Well, we'll let him cook us a meal in the woods. How's that?"

Don hung up the receiver, heart pounding.

"That Mr. Mackay's a prince!" he exclaimed, warmly.

On the Saturday of the scheduled trip, two uniformed Scouts met by appointment, fully equipped for a day's outing in the woods. It was seven-thirty in the morning which gave them an hour and a half to go by subway downtown, crossing over to the Grand Central Station where they were to catch the train for Redcliffe-on-the-Hudson.

"I was looking Redcliffe up on the map," informed Don, "It's about forty-five miles from New York. Takes almost an hour to get there."

"Fine day for the trip, except for this high wind," observed Mark.

"From the west," added Don, "Won't rain anyway."

"How can you tell that?" Mark wanted to know.

"By the clouds," answered Don, "See how rolled and sort of jagged they are? They always bring wind . . . or the wind brings them. Take your choice."

"Gosh, there's so many things a guy doesn't know when he stops to think about it, isn't there?" exclaimed the Tenderfoot, wonderingly.

The journey by train, most of which was along the glorious blue of the Hudson, was a treat in itself. And Don and Mark were so absorbed in the sights that they scarcely realized it before the train was slowing down for "Redcliffe! . . . Redcliffe! . . . All out for Redcliffe!"

And there, on the station platform, was Morton P. Mackay, bare-headed, in sport togs, scanning the car windows even before the train came to a stop!

"We're on time and so is he!" said Don to Mark as they hurried down the aisle.

"Well, Rader! Glad to see you!" greeted Mr. Mackay, rushing up and shaking Don's hand.

"Mr. Mackay, my friend Mark Whipple!" introduced Don.

"And you, sir!" welcomed the architect, just as cordially. "All right, boys. This way to the car. Pretty stiff wind but otherwise ideal! I raced a couple of jackrabbits on the way down here. Maybe we'll run into some flying fish on the way back."

Don grinned and nudged Mark.

"Isn't he a circus?"

The two had been placed promptly and completely at their ease by Mr. Mackay's attitude which, in their company, was more that of an

overgrown boy than the prominent architect he was known to be.

A handsome new roadster stood out on the drive and it was to this that Mr. Mackay led the two scouts.

"Get in!" he commanded, opening the door, "I'll go round the other side."

The trip from the station to Woodhaven Lodge was through three and a half miles of unsurpassed scenery. It was an uphill, winding climb most of the way with haze-topped mountains in the distance and heavily wooded hills and valleys in the foreground. A private roadway, extending for more than a mile off the main highway, led into Mr. Mackay's estate under overhanging branches of great trees and head high shrubbery flanked by thoroughly wild underbrush.

"Such country!" cried Don, all but overwhelmed.

"But you haven't seen anything yet," Mr. Mackay promised. Then, as a point of information, "This road also leads to Judge Latham's place, a quarter of a mile beyond. I'll take you boys over there after while. The Judge is usually out week-ends. Maybe we can meet him."

But first Mr. Mackay took his two guests straight to Woodhaven Lodge where Mrs.

Mackay was waiting on the veranda to welcome the boy who had saved her husband's life.

Don and Mark both gasped as they leaped from the car and beheld the beauty of their surroundings which lent additional charm to the quiet splendor of Mr. Mackay's summer home. The place had unquestionably cost a fortune. But Mr. Mackay, with the artistry afforded by his architectural background, had worked out some exquisite effects so that the cost involved had been made to yield its fullest return in tasteful appearance.

Taking Don's arm Mr. Mackay fairly raced him up the stone-rimmed path to the house.

"Here he is!" he called, as Mrs. Mackay, a bright-faced little woman, hurried down the steps to meet them. "Donald Rader! . . . Donald, meet Mrs. Mackay!"

Meet her! Mrs. Mackay waved aside all thoughts of formality and swept an embarrassed Don into her arms. Mark stood by, looking on, himself feeling awkward. But Mr. Mackay was obviously getting much enjoyment from the situation.

"You see, Mr. Whipple," he kidded, "What you'd have gotten if you'd saved my life?"

Mark nodded, his face coloring.

"I believe I feel more indebted to you than Mr. Mackay could feel," Mrs. Mackay told Don.

"My, I'm glad I wasn't there when it happened! I almost went down that morning, too. Why, when Mr. Mackay called me up on the phone half an hour later I thought he was joking."

"I *was* joking," sided Mr. Mackay, with a wink at Don and Mark, "I've always believed with Shakespeare that 'all's well that ends well'."

"Just the same it came close to giving me nervous prostration," declared Mrs. Mackay, "And to think, Mr. Rader, if it hadn't been for you . . ."

Don smiled. He never felt more self-conscious or at a loss as to what to do or say than when the conversation was concerning him. In this instance the man he had saved now came to *his* rescue.

"Here, Molly!" Mr. Mackay called, "You haven't met Mr. Rader's friend yet."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" apologized Mrs. Mackay, extending her hand, which Mark took, shyly.

"Mr. Whipple," introduced Mr. Mackay, "Dang it, boys—I'm going to call you by your first names after this!"

"Sure!" urged Don.

The Mackays then took their guests to the veranda where they chatted for half an hour at

the end of which time Mr. Mackay offered to show the boys around the estate.

"I want you fellows to see what I think is one of the prettiest and wildest spots in America," added the architect, "It's a little hike from here so we'll take along something to make a meal on."

"Oh, *we've* got the grub!" volunteered Don, "It's what's required for Mark's cooking test —a pound of steak and some potatoes!"

"Fine!" commended Mr. Mackay, "Then all I'll take along will be my appetite!"

The party set out shortly with Mr. Mackay in the lead, pointing out many things of interest and, as the hike progressed, the architect came more and more to appreciate that he was in the company of one who knew the woods better than he with all the years he had spent in the open.

"You don't miss a thing, do you?" he asked of Don, finally, with a glance of admiration.

"Oh, yes, lots of things," laughed the fellow who was back in his element again even though this was not Michigan, "Hello! See this, Mark?"

Don stopped and pulled a clump of hair from the bark of a small hemlock. The Tenderfoot looked at it curiously.

"Yeh? What of it?"

"Why, some animal's been along here within the last half hour. What kind would you say it was?"

Mr. Mackay came over interestedly.

Mark shook his head, mystified. "How would I know?"

"Use your observation!" commanded Don, "Would you say the animal was big or small?"

"Search me!" Mark's expression was one of blank helplessness. "How could anybody tell that?"

"Easy," answered Don, "Whereabouts, on that tree, did I pick the hair from?"

Mark's interest quickened. He examined the tree again and suddenly bent forward.

"Here's some more hair!" he exclaimed, picking it off.

Don grinned. "I wondered how long it would be before you discovered it," he said, "All right! Now, how big was the animal?"

"Well," reasoned Mark, "The hair wasn't so far up on the tree. It must have been pretty small."

His instructor nodded. "Now, you are coming!"

"I believe you said the animal had been along within the last half hour," reminded Mr. Mackay, "Would you mind telling us tenderfoots how you figured that?"

"By the pebbles at the foot of the tree," enlightened the experienced scout, "See! They have been turned over with their undersides up and they're still moist . . . haven't had time to dry off yet."

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed the former gang leader, "Sounds simple to hear you tell about it."

"It is simple when you know it," insisted Don, "The tracks aren't visible right around here but which way would you say the animal was going?"

Mr. Mackay glanced questioningly at Mark and Mark glanced, just as questioningly, at him.

"I guess I've been a *dude* woodsman all my life!" laughed the architect, "At least I feel like a dude in the presence of this Sherlock Holmes!"

"I can't figure that one out," admitted Mark.

Don pointed to places on the tree where the bark had chipped off.

"Look here! The bark was rubbed off by a body moving from north to south. See—pieces of bark are sticking out . . . all shoved up and back, in the direction the animal was going."

"Like reading a book," observed Mr. Mackay, "Donald, I'll have to hire you as my guide and see these woods all over again!"

"Can you make out what the animal was?" asked Mark, now keenly interested.

Don examined the specimen of hair closely.

"Yes," he answered, decisively, "It was a bobcat!"

Mark staggered, placing a hand to his head. "Well, for the love of blue mud!" he exploded.

"That was the only real hard one," explained Don, "It just happens that I am familiar with a bobcat's hair but it generally takes an expert woodsman to tell. Trailing is something that calls for a lot of practice to be good in!"

To which Mr. Mackay and a very much impressed Tenderfoot readily agreed!

Continuing on, with the woods and country revealing one thrilling thing after another, Mr. Mackay finally brought the boys to the place which he characterized as "the roughest spot this side of Canada." And so it certainly looked. The nature-enthused architect had climbed the boys up the mountain side overlooking ninety acres of indescribably marvelous country . . . a broad flat with, three hundred feet the other side, a gem-studded lake nestled in a cleft between two mountains. The lake was a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide with, on one end, a leaping torrent outlet. It was fed mostly by cold springs, the country round about being thoroughly wooded, screen-

ing its diamond-like surface in varying shades of green.

"Wow! What an ideal spot for a camp site!" cried Don, nerves tingling at the gorgeous expanse before him, "Who owns this land through here?"

"I do, on this side the lake," replied Mr. Mackay, "And Judge Latham owns the land on the other."

"Gee!" exclaimed Mark, "Must be some valuable!"

"It is. Look, boys—you see that great rock cliff over there?"

Don and Mark followed their host's pointer finger.

"Oh, yes!"

"Sure!"

"Well, that cliff rises forty feet sheer from the water which is over two hundred feet deep there," informed Mr. Mackay, "And it's on top of that rock shelf that Judge Latham lives."

"Say, what a location!"

"His home's a couple hundred feet back from the edge, of course," continued Mr. Mackay, "But it's in a historic spot. In the old days the Kitchawonk Indians used to roam this country and that rock ledge was their favorite lookout."

"Boy, what I'm learning today!" breathed the Tenderfoot.

"Let's work our way around toward the Judge's place," suggested Mr. Mackay.

The wind was in their faces as they started the descent from the mountain side, a cool, steady-blowing wind with sharp-edged clouds scudding swiftly before it. Once on the flat expanse of land, progress was more rapid until the trio came to a small clearing, ideally sheltered by boulder rocks rising out of the soil, and some fifty yards from the lake which was lost to view beyond a fringe of hemlocks. Stately oaks stood guard about the clearing and Don and Mark both paused to express delight at the spot.

"This is the best yet!" was Don's verdict, "Good place to build a fire and have our meal, such as it's going to be."

"Aw, Don, you'd better take charge of things today," hedged Mark, with a concerned glance toward Mr. Mackay, "If I'd make a mess of it . . ."

"Don't mind me, I've cooked, myself!" reassured the architect, "Anything tastes good over a camp fire, even if it's charred. So you boys go to it and while you're busy fixing I'll just hike over to Judge Latham's and see if he's there. Be back in half an hour or so. If I find the Judge in I'll take you over after we've had our eats."

Left to themselves, Don immediately put Tenderfoot Whipple to work.

"Pick out a place and build your fire," he ordered, "And remember—you can't use more than two matches!"

Mark looked about him, speculatively, then moved toward one of the boulders which acted as a wind break.

"How's this?" he asked, selecting a flat rock in front of the boulder, removed from trees and grass.

"Very good," approved Don, sitting down and preparing to look on, "Now, go to it!"

Don was particularly interested in seeing how effectively Mark was able to use his knife and hatchet. The former gang leader started instantly to collect dry twigs and bigger pieces of underbrush which he laid in two separate piles. Then, with his knife, Mark cut the twigs into long slivers, looking up every once and awhile to make a wry face at his watcher. Some of the twigs he spent considerable time with, whittling them almost into shavings. Leave it to him, he was taking no chances on not having enough inflammable material for his two lonely matches to ignite!

Finishing with preparations, Mark piled his carefully cut twigs, with some slightly larger

pieces, on end so that they formed a cone shaped mound.

"So far, so good," grinned Don, "And now—all you've got to do is light it!"

Mark walked about the unlit pile, fingering his two matches and holding his breath. This was a very serious business. He had been instructed thoroughly as to every move and, when called upon to pass his test, could certainly not depend upon outside help. But, shucks! He was making something hard that was easy.

The Tenderfoot leaned down, struck his first match and applied it. The light flickered for a moment, sputtered, and flickered again, but it seemed to be catching the wind from some place and a second later, after frenzied attempts on Mark's part to shield it, the flame died out.

"Double darn!" said Mark, and rose to his feet, gazing ruefully at the blackened tip of the match. He glanced sidewise at the fellow who was putting him through the paces.

"Oh, you've got lots of matches left," encouraged Don, grinning, "Half your supply!"

"Go hang yourself by your ears!" retorted the Tenderfoot, stooping down again and scratching his head. "Now, what in thunder did I do wrong?"

A moment later Mark carefully wet his finger

and held it aloft, this act causing Don to howl outright.

"That's all right!" answered the novice, grimly, "I'm not going to make the same bonehead twice. I'm going to know where that wind's coming from!"

Mark then proceeded to move around his little pyramid of wood testing with his dampened finger until he was certain he was to windward. Then, biting his lips tensely, he held his hands low, striking the match with great caution. This time the wind caught the flame from behind and carried it into the shavings so that they ignited with a flare. The next instant a fire was crackling merrily and Mark, flinging his hat into the air, danced a jig of derision, aimed at his "dear teacher."

Don good-humoredly got to his feet and shook the Tenderfoot's hand.

"Perfect!" he congratulated, "And now for the eats! Snap it up, too! I'm darn hungry!"

Don't rush me!" begged Mark, "I'm liable to drop the meat in the fire. And just now I could come close to eating it raw. Boy, doesn't this outdoor life give you an appetite?"

"Watch that fire!" directed Don, "The wind is carrying sparks!"

The Tenderfoot retreated to the fireside, taking the pound of steak and potatoes from his

pack. As he did so there came, carried on a gust of wind, the sound of a high pitched voice in a terror-stricken scream.

"What's that?" cried Mark, glancing questioningly at Don. But Don's face was turned in the direction of the lake.

Almost at once there came the spanking impact of a body striking water followed by the sounds of thrashing.

"Quick!" shouted Don, starting toward the lake on the run, "Smother that fire and follow me!"

CHAPTER XI

IN LINE OF DUTY

It was the work of seconds for Tenderfoot Mark Whipple to put out the fire he had so carefully builded. Some wildly kicked clouds of sand attended to that. And then Mark was on his way, dashing madly after First Class Scout Don Rader, in answer to the frenzied cry for help which had come from the lake front.

Arriving at the water's edge, the two scouts found themselves standing upon a rock basin. This basin curved around the end of the lake and rose into the high shelf Mr. Mackay had pointed out to them from their elevation on the mountain side.

At first glance nothing was to be seen and then, rising to the deep blue surface of the water, some hundred yards out and under the brow of the precipice there appeared a body. A hand reached up, spasmodically, clutching at the air and the head bobbed out for an instant, a head of long, tousled hair!

"It's a girl!" cried Don and Mark together.

With the training of long experience, Don

DON EXECUTED A BEAUTIFUL SHALLOW DIVE.

Don Rader, Trail Blazer. *Page* 153

looked about him for some means of affecting a rescue. There were none immediately at hand and the girl was already going down for the second time. Don threw off his shirt and shoes.

"Stand by!" he told Mark, "And yell for help. I've got to swim for her!"

Don executed a beautiful shallow dive, coming up in swimming position and stroking swiftly for the spot where the girl had last been seen.

"Help!" shouted Mark, feeling desperately inadequate in the face of the situation. He could not swim well himself as Don had very well known but it seemed that he *must* do something more than just shout for aid. And yet, Don had commanded him to "stand by."

"Help!" Anxiously, Mark looked toward the rock ledge, realizing that Judge Latham's home was back somewhere upon it. But the wind, blowing from that direction, carried his cries the other way.

Once again Mark looked toward the lake. Don had traversed half the distance. No girl in sight. A hundred yards out was quite a swim . . . and the water was very cold.

"There she is!"

Mark spotted her, just a glimpse of her middy blouse and the tousled head as it barely reached

the top. But Don, now out near her, had not seen. He treaded water, looking about.

"Hey!" yelled Mark, frantically, making a megaphone of his hands.

Don, hearing, looked back, and swam over in the direction Mark pointed. Of a sudden Mark saw him up-end and disappear beneath the water.

To the Tenderfoot, watching, it seemed an interminable time before Don came to the top. Mark, meanwhile, had lived over the agony of his experience in the water. A river or a lake was a fearful thing if one did not know how to handle oneself upon it! But, when Don did come to the surface he brought with him that for which he had dived. And, heading toward shore, Don started towing the slender body of the girl in with a cross chest carry.

"Atta boy, Don!" cried Mark, hardly realizing what he was saying, "Help! Somebody! Help!"

But apparently no one was within hearing distance. And the coldness of the water as well as the long carry seemed to be affecting Don. He was slowing up more and more, his strokes losing their power, becoming labored.

Mark yelled again and cast about him frantically for some means of rescue. The rope about his waist . . . thirty feet of it! Why

Mark instantly pulled in the slack and jerked the noose taut, firmly encircling Don's wrist.

"All right! I got you!" he yelled, "Take it easy . . . I'll pull you in!"

Bracing himself on the shelving of rock, the Tenderfoot pulled, hand over hand, slowly and painfully. Don was too exhausted to help himself much, it requiring about all his strength to support the girl. And, by the time Mark had pulled in the thirty feet of rope his hands were bleeding from his efforts, with the biggest part of his exertion yet before him. Rescued and rescuer were in the water directly below a rock ledge which, at this point was five feet above the surface . . . just too far for Mark to reach down and lift them out without falling himself.

"Say, Don," he directed, as Don, clutching a slight crevice in the rock, hung on, blue with cold. "You'll have to slip that noose off and put it around the girl so I can pull her up."

"My g-g-gosh!"

Teeth chattering, Don pulled at the noose which had cut into his flesh. But his fingers were too mumb.

"I—I c-c-can't!" he called up.

Mark, momentarily stumped, suddenly thought to make a noose of the free end, grasp the rope by its middle and pass the other end

down so that, once fastened to the girl, he had them both.

"Here!" he called to Don, "Slip this over her!"

And Don did, Mark then pulling the girl up first and laying her unconscious form out upon the dry, flat surface of the rock. Another strenuous pull brought Don over the edge, where he slumped, too weak to rise.

"G-g-get busy, Mark!" he pleaded, pointing to the girl, "N-no time to waste. Start to work on her!"

"But what'll I do?" asked the Tenderfoot.

Don groaned and tried to straighten up. Not yet. Too all in.

"T-t-turn her face down!" he directed, unable to get the tremor from his voice, "G-g-good! N-now straddle her at knees . . . Now . . . hands on lungs . . . d-d-down further . . . th-th-there! . . . arms stiff . . . now . . . push down . . . snap hands off . . . push . . . let go! . . . push! . . . let go! . . . that's the stuff . . . keep it up . . . push! let go!"

And Don, sinking down, did what Mark called later, "passing out of the picture." But he had given the Tenderfoot enough instruction for Mark to keep methodically at it, which he did,

resuming meanwhile his frenzied cries for help.

A gurgling sound came from the mouth of the girl and a great sobbing gasp for breath. This, after Mark had been laboring for five long minutes! Another five and she had vomited considerable water, breathing freer with each gasp.

"She's coming to," thought Mark, "Maybe I'd better have a look at Don."

But just as he was anxiously considering abandoning the one for the other, Don raised up. He assumed a sitting position and looked about him, dazedly.

"Oh! All right, Mark! Good boy! I'll relieve you!"

"No you won't. I'm getting along all right. You stay right there!"

At that moment a shout came from the top of the high rock and, looking up, the two scouts beheld two hatless figures. The figures disappeared almost at once, Mark having recognized one of them as Mr. Mackay.

"Wonder who this girl is?" he said to Don, curiously, glancing down at the middy blouse, the knickers, and the high top shoes extending to the knees.

"You got me!" replied Don, gazing at the face, still drawn and white. "Looks like an out-of-doors kid. I can't imagine her away off

here alone, though. Must be a guest of the Lathams!"

Mr. Mackay and Judge Latham, as soon as they could descend to the lower rock level, came running. And Don and Mark were surprised to hear the white-haired Judge Latham exclaiming, "Peggy! . . . Peggy!"

"He mustn't touch her now!" warned Don, "Not till you bring her to! . . ." Don staggered to his feet and stood, unsteadily. "Wait a minute!" he called as the two much concerned men approached, "Keep back! You mustn't spoil the rhythm. See! . . . Out! . . . In! . . . Out! . . . In! . . . She'll be all right if you'll just let her alone!"

"Peggy!" implored Judge Latham, almost beside himself, "Speak to me! Peggy!"

"How'd it happen?" Mr. Mackay demanded.

Don shook his head.

"Don't know. Maybe *she* will, though . . . when she comes around."

"Oh, boys—save her!" pleaded the Judge, sinking down a few feet away, "Save her!"

A trying five minutes followed with Don reassuring a father made hysterical by sight of his daughter's condition. But it was just as Don had said. The girl was coming around. She opened her eyes once or twice for an instant

and groaned. On one of these occasions she recognized her father.

"Daddy!"

"Better get her to the house now," advised Don, "Wrap her in blankets and give her something hot to drink."

Under his direction Judge Latham's daughter was lifted by Mark and Mr. Mackay and carried up the steep grade to the house. There Mrs. Latham and a maid, apprised of what had happened, took Peggy in charge while Judge Latham insisted on Don removing his clothes and being wrapped in blankets himself.

"See about Mark," Don urged. "Those cuts on his hands ought to be treated."

"We'll attend to him," promised Mr. Mackay, "You take it easy for awhile."

And later, as the two boys were resting with Peggy fast recovering, Judge Latham gave the cook orders to prepare dinner for all.

"This is going to be a real thanksgiving feast!" he declared.

"Unusual boy, that Don Rader," Mr. Mackay remarked, with the Judge and himself on the sun porch overlooking the lake, "I understand the Scout Motto is 'Be Prepared', and he certainly is a fine exponent of it."

"Yes, with two life savings to his credit,"

said the Judge, thoughtfully, "I wonder what I can do for him?"

Mr. Mackay laughed.

"Just *try* to do something!" he challenged, "I've been trying to figure out something to do for him myself but these scouts are so dang self-sufficient! They won't take anything. They consider it their *duty* to help others. How's that for a grasping and greedy world?"

Judge Latham shook his head, admiringly.

"I'll find some way," he announced, determinedly, "Both those boys should be rewarded."

"Well, if you discover how it can be done, let me know so I can join you," begged Mr. Mackay, earnestly.

It was a happy household that convened more than an hour later in the Latham's dining room with the principals in what might have been a tragic experience, now completely restored. Don and Mark here had their first glimpse of Peggy Latham—a glimpse which showed her to advantage as a most attractive and healthy-looking girl of about fifteen. Peggy came forward at once and gave a hand to each of the scouts.

"I'm awfully glad you fellows were nearby," she said, unaffectedly. A simple little declaration but it carried a warmth of grateful feeling.

And Peggy seemed to sense that anything further would bring embarrassment for she quickly changed the subject, explaining that she was to blame for having gone too near the edge of the bluff in the strong wind. Ordinarily a strong swimmer, her loss of balance toppling her from a height of forty feet caused her to strike the water in a prone position, stunning her. She had screamed on the way down and, after the impact, had only a hazy recollection of striving to keep up, weighted as she was by her heavy shoes and had soon ceased to struggle.

"Boys, wade right in and do yourselves justice!" urged Judge Latham.

"Yes, boys," chuckled Mr. Mackay, "If you don't get justice in a Judge's home, I don't know where you'll get it."

Don and Mark grinned.

"It's a good thing something came along to save me from my own meal," ventured the Tenderfoot.

"That's right," recalled Mr. Mackay, laughing, "The boys were to work out a couple of tests. And Mark, here, was to cook us a meal of steak and potatoes. I'm sorry, folks, but I think we'd better excuse Mark and let him finish what he started!"

The suggestion brought a groan from the

Tenderfoot and Judge Latham proposed that the matter be "tabled."

A pleasant half hour was spent, mostly in eating. The party then adjourned to the sun porch where Peggy engaged Don and Mark in conversation, talking animatedly of the out-of-doors.

"I love it!" she declared, "Simply crazy about it! Daddy calls this his retreat out here. It's where he gets away from the world —and people! You see, Daddy's work's awfully nerve-wracking. He has so much on his mind all the time . . . and so much responsibility about deciding things."

Don and Mark, listening attentively, nodded, sympathetically.

"Why, just now Daddy's judging a case . . . probably you've heard of it . . . the bunch of gangsters who robbed the New York Union Bank, killed three employees and got away with almost a million dollars?"

"Oh, yes," said Mark, "The Stillwell gang!"

"They're the ones," continued Peggy, "Well, they're an awfully hard lot to convict. They're said to be part of a nation-wide gang and they've been terrorizing the witnesses so that most folks are afraid to testify against them. One trial was thrown out because the jury disagreed and there's a second trial to start in an-

other week. Why, you should see the threatening letters Daddy's getting!"

"Threatening letters?" Don and Mark exclaimed together.

"Two or three a day," smiled Peggy, "Oh, he's used to things like that. People trying to intimidate him. I'm used to it, too . . .!"

"You?"

"Yes, about half the letters warn Daddy that unless he lets them off with light sentences, there'll be harm done his family!"

"Good night!" exclaimed Don, shocked, "I shouldn't think that would be pleasant! Doesn't your father have to have someone on guard all the time?"

Peggy shook her head.

"My, no! He couldn't be bothered. Besides, there's not many of these letters that mean anything more than threats. Daddy turns them all over to the police and forgets about 'em."

Don and Mark exchanged amazed glances. Here was an interesting, personal sidelight upon a man who was one of the best known and best respected judges in America. The general public, as well as the underworld, had come to recognize that decisions handed down by him were eminently fair, unswayed by sentiment or influence, with punishment meted out fearlessly and in accord with the severity of the offense.

"Stonewall" Latham, his enemies had called him, this title singularly enough, being accepted by those who loved him as possibly best characterizing his immovable attitude upon that which he knew to be right.

"Just the same," declared Don, "I don't know as I'd care to live like your father does. Every time I'd be going past a dark alley or along a lonely road I'd be wondering whether I was going to be slugged or shot. No, thank you!"

The talk then switched to scouting and Peggy surprised by revealing a knowledge of woodcraft, camping and signalling which would have been a credit to many scouts.

"How in the world did you pick all this up?" Don asked, interestingly.

"Oh, just by study and living outdoors," said Peggy, "Trailing's great fun! Don't you think so?"

Peggy's question was directed more at Mark who had remained self-consciously in the background.

"Why, I . . . that's something I haven't done yet," explained the Tenderfoot, "Don was showing me a little about it on the way out here . . . where a bobcat had been!"

"Really?" Peggy's eyes widened. "Oh, I wish I could go on a real tracking expedition

once. Maybe you fellows could come out again and we could get up a party?"

"That would be great!" rejoined Mark, "I'd come along to be pack horse and ask all the dumb questions."

Peggy laughed. Then, turning to Don she asked, as if impelled by a sudden thought, "Do you know the International Morse Code?"

"Why, yes," admitted Don, "I used to. Suppose I'm pretty rusty now. Do you?"

Judge Latham's daughter nodded.

"I learned it when brother had his amateur wireless station. It was great sport decoding messages. Lots of times I've sat up all night!"

"Could you send as well as receive?" Don wanted to know, his amazement increasing. Here was a most unusual girl!

"Listen!" commanded Peggy, roguishly, stepping to a nearby table and tapping upon it with her fingers.

"Here! Here! What's going on here?" demanded Judge Latham, moving over in company with his wife and Mr. Mackay, "This won't do! Secret communication!"

But Peggy, smiling, continued, Don giving her tappings the closest attention while Mark and the others looked on, absorbed. It was as though the girl and the boy were playing a game. Peggy stood on one side the table, eyes

watching Don's face intently, half-smiling as she tapped lightly and distinctly.

"Q.R.S." Don tapped out in reply, which, translated, meant, *"Send slower!"*

Peggy laughed at this.

"I'll repeat," she said. And started in again. Dot! Dot! . . .

"'I'", decoded Don.

Dash! . . . . Dot! Dot! Dot! Dot! . . . Dot! Dot! . . . . Dash! Dot! . . . . Dot! Dash! Dot! Dot!" went the message.

". . . *'think'!"* read Don.

Dash! Dot! Dash! Dash! . . . . Dash! Dash! Dash! . . . Dot! Dot! Dash!

" . . . *'you'!"*

And then, not too fast, regularly and clearly, the rest of the message was tapped out so that Don, following, caught it all . . .

"I . . . t-h-i-n-k . . . y-o-u . . . a-r-e . . . a . . . v-e-r-y . . . b-r-a-v-e s-c-o-u-t!"

"Did you get it?" Peggy asked, eyes dancing.

Don's face colored. "Sure I got it," he answered, and tapped in reply:

"T-h-a-n-k-s . . . I . . . t-h-i-n-k . . . y-o-u . . . a-r-e . . . a . . . v-e-r-y s-m-a-r-t . . . g-i-r-l!"

It was now the turn for Peggy's face to color.

She bowed mischievously in acknowledgment of Don's coded compliment.

"Now tell us what it's all about!" commanded Mr. Mackay.

"Oh, no!" protested Peggy.

And all laughed.

It was high time for the scouts and Mr. Mackay to be returning to Woodhaven Lodge. This mid-afternoon dinner had put a "crimp," as Mr. Mackay had expressed it, in his plans to feed the boys at evening dinner prior to putting them on the train bound back for New York.

"I don't know what Mrs. Mackay's going to say to that, either," said the architect, "Because she herself intends to make the boys one of her good old-fashioned shortcakes."

"You don't need to stop her on my account," reassured Mark, before he thought.

And Mr. Mackay had answered, "All right, if the rest of the dinner is off, the shortcake stands!"

"Boys," said Judge Latham, putting an arm about Don's and Mark's shoulders, "No use for me or Mrs. Latham trying to tell you how much we appreciate what you've done for us. But we're going to get even. Now what is there that we can do for you?"

Mr. Mackay looked on, smilingly.

"Not a thing," replied Don.

And Mr. Mackay nodded, knowingly.

"Oh, yes there *is!*" added Don, suddenly.

Judge Latham's face brightened.

"Name it!" he invited, and glanced triumphantly in Mr. Mackay's direction.

"We'd thank you a lot," said Don, "If you folks here wouldn't say anything to anybody about . . . well, about what happened."

Judge Latham's face fell and Mr. Mackay, who for a moment had appeared doubtful, now resumed his knowing smile.

"Why, I . . . I don't see any necessity for that," the Judge returned, a bit taken aback, "You scouts have done a meritorious deed and you deserve credit for it."

"Please, Mr. Latham," appealed Don, "That's not the way we look at it. All we do is try our best to live up to our Scout Oath—'to help other people at all times' And we don't talk about what we do . . . we just *do.* That's why we'd rather other folks wouldn't talk about it, either. It makes it kind of hard on us!"

Judge Latham nodded, understandingly.

"But would there be any objection to this being reported to your scoutmaster?" he asked.

Don hesitated. "N-no. He's different. He's

what we call our Second Daddy and a Scout Daddy keeps mum on everything like that."

"All right, boys," said Judge Latham, "It will afford me great pleasure to see your scoutmaster in person and to tell him how splendidly you have performed an act of duty. As for us here, I'll speak for all by saying that you can depend on no word getting out. Now, is there any more that we can do?"

"No, sir!" replied Don, "And thank you very much, sir! We've enjoyed the meal and we had a fine time."

"You bet we did!" echoed Mark.

"Well, I want you both to come again," said the Judge, cordially.

"Yes, *please* do!" urged Peggy.

"Perhaps the whole troop might like to come out some time this summer," suggested Judge Latham.

"Now, there's an idea!" seconded Mr. Mackay, "How does that strike you, Don?"

"Right between the eyes!" The reply was instant and enthusiastic.

"Maybe pitch camp for a week or so," added Judge Latham.

"In this beautiful country?" gasped Don, "On *your* property?"

"If they'd like to."

"*Like* to?" repeated Don, quite overcome by

the suggestion, "Why, Mr. Latham, they'd be *crazy* to!"

"Then we'll see what can be done about it," declared the Judge, smiling.

"The 'we' included *me*," insisted Mr. Mackay, "Because I'm going to be 'in' on this too, or know the reason why! Judge Latham and I will see your scoutmaster about it the first of the week!"

CHAPTER XII

DON OVERCOMES AN OBJECTION

TRUE to their word, Judge Latham and Morton P. Mackay, prominent and wealthy owners of adjoining estates in Westchester county, New York State, visited Scoutmaster Wheeler of Troop 36, Manhattan, in his office Monday morning. The intimate details of that visit were not recorded and neither will they ever be repeated but it is reasonable to infer that much was said about one first class scout in particular, as well as one tenderfoot, together with considerable about the results Scoutmaster Wheeler was evidently getting from his scouts in general. But the big upshot of the meeting was the invitation which the two gentlemen left with Scoutmaster Wheeler for Troop 36 to avail itself of the camping site afforded by their property.

"Come out and pick your own spot, they urged, "And if your scouts want to camp there for a week to three weeks its perfectly all right with us."

"That's mighty fine of you gentlemen,"

Scoutmaster Wheeler assured. "To tell you the truth we haven't any definite camp site and I've just been looking around with the hopes of finding some place we could utilize for a summer's camp. I haven't any doubt that this will do nicely but first I'll have to get permission of the Manhattan Council to make use of your kind offer."

"Perfectly all right," assured Mr. Mackay, "Just call us and let us know and feel free to come ahead any time."

"Yes, or to tell us if there is anything further we may do," added Judge Latham.

"Thank you, we will!" replied the Scoutmaster, "You'll hear from us very shortly."

And they did! Within a week, to be exact. The Manhattan Council had not only given consent but had offered to equip Troop 36 with tents and such other paraphernalia as would be required for a ten days' outing. The only thing that remained to be decided was the date for the camp and this was settled upon at the next meeting of the Troop as the first week and a half in August.

"Everybody make your plans accordingly!" said Scoutmaster Wheeler, "I've been out and looked over the camp site and so have Don and Mark. And when we tell you that it's a rip snorter, that you've never seen a place that

compares to it, then—if you don't agree with us when you see it yourself—you can throw us off the highest mountain!"

Following the meeting, Scoutmaster Wheeler was waited upon by Tenderfoot Mark Whipple who wished to see him a moment alone.

"Say, Mr. Wheeler," started the former gang leader, not quite sure of his approach, "I . . . er . . . you know there's a couple of fellows in the crowd I used to run around with . . . they've gotten kind of interested in scouting on account of what I've been telling them and showing them about it . . . and I was thinking it would be a mighty good time to take them in, if the boys would have them, just before going to camp . . . where they could get all that experience. They could pass the Tenderfoot tests right now!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler looked his astonishment.

"Do you mean that they know the Scout Oath and Law?"

"Yes, sir! By heart! They repeated it to me last night."

"But what's the idea, unless they were sure of a chance to be taken in?"

The former gang leader grinned. "The idea is that they wanted to *be prepared!*" he replied.

"Hmmm! I see! . . ." rejoined the

Scoutmaster, secretly very much impressed, "Well, what are these fellows' names?"

"Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan, sir," supplied Mark.

"Get them to make out their applications for membership," advised Scoutmaster Wheeler, "And we'll have the Troop consider them next meeting."

Mark could not conceal his good feeling.

"Gee, Mr. Wheeler! That'll be great if they can get in!"

It was Tenderfoot Mark Whipple's ambition to be able to qualify for Second Class Scout by the time the Troop went to camp so that he could set to work, during his stay at camp, on the earning of a First Class rating.

"Well, I've earned my dollar and smacked her in the bank!" he announced several days later on meeting Don. "I got me a job delivering morning papers to apartment houses on Fort Washington which gives me four dollars a week. Three dollars of it I'm handing over to mother to pay her back for the jack she loaned me when I got my uniform and stuff."

"Good for you!" congratulated Don, "That comes close to winding you up, doesn't it?"

The former gang leader shook his head.

"I don't know," he said, doubtfully, "There's a couple things been bothering me.

One of them is—that 'Good Turns' business. I have a deuce of a time finding somebody to do a Good Turn to every day. Why, I almost grabbed a big sack of groceries from a woman's hand last night. I was so afraid she wouldn't let me carry 'em for her so I'd have a chance to do my daily stunt!"

Don laughed.

"Trouble with you is, Mark, you're looking too far away. You can't manufacture Good Turns. They come to you. Lots of times they're under a fellow's nose and he doesn't see 'em because he's searching for 'em with a telescope!"

"Might be something to that," agreed Mark, thoughtfully.

"Sure there's something to it!" emphasized Don, "There's thousands of ways to do Good Turns and lots of the best Good Turns aren't finished in a day, either. A fellow sometimes has to work at them for weeks and months."

The former gang leader stared straight ahead, then nodded slowly, a resolute look coming into his face.

"Thanks, Don, old scout," he said, "You've put me on the right track again. You know what I'm going to do? I guess I don't have to tell you—my Dad's in a bad way. And if I could help him, I'd be helping Mom. What I've

been doing is fighting him, which isn't getting me any place. But if I made Dad my Good Turn and got busy figuring on some way to get next to him . . . ."

"You'll find the way," encouraged Don, softly, "If you'd ask me I'd say you'd blazed quite a trail already!"

At the next meeting of Troop 36 the names of Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan, proposed for membership, were favorably passed upon and arrangements made for Scout Whipple's old pals to be taken in the following Tuesday night. Scout Ozzie Brinkman knew better than to raise any further objections to the type of fellows under consideration for the troop's experiment with the former ringleader of the neighborhood gang had been so successful that it had made more such experiments very desirable indeed.

"Mark'll see that these fellows keep step," Lump told Sly. "We don't need to worry!"

"What do you know?" informed Bean, "Ozzie just told me Scoutmaster Wheeler had signed his application for an Eagle! Ozzie's qualified for twenty-three Merit Badges now and says he's about ready to qualify for three more. Some worker!"

"Yeah! Only trouble is, he talks too much about it," criticized Art. "He's always feed-

ing you with 'I did this' and 'I did that'. Makes a guy sick after while!"

"Well, he hasn't got the Eagle yet, you know," reminded Sly, "They can hold up the award till Alaska gets warm if a scout gives any cause for not deserving it."

"Which is only right," declared Lump, "Because scouting isn't only just earning Merit Badges . . . although that's plenty! But if a fellow's spirit isn't right . . . I don't know . . . he never seems like a real scout to me."

"He *isn't* a real scout!" insisted Bean, "He's just a counterfeit dollar bill walking around on a Boy Scout's purchasing power!"

"Oh, wow! Bean just pulled a hot one!" howled Art, "Tell 'em that one again, Beany. It ought to go in the Boy Scouts' Handbook!"

It was not until the eventful morning of August first, the morning that the Troop was leaving for camp, that Don Rader had his first meeting with Mark Whipple's father. And he would not have met him then had Mark not failed to ring his bell at the appointed time so that they could report at the school together.

"Wonder what's keeping him?" pondered Don, hesitating to call, "He's usually right on the dot."

But as the time grew later and but a few minutes remained before the truck, furnished by Sly Bacon's father, was scheduled to leave the school corner, Don made bold to ring the Whipple's doorbell. As he did so he heard loud voices within—a family quarrel in progress!

"Good night!" Don said to himself, "What am I sticking my foot in?"

The ringing of the doorbell brought a temporary silence. Then Don heard steps down the hall, Mark's steps.

"Hello!" said Mark, his face strained, "Come in a minute!"

"No, I—I'll wait outside," suggested Don, "You be much longer?"

"Come in!" the former gang leader insisted, taking Mark's arm, "Listen," he continued, in a low voice, as he pulled Don into the hall, "Dad's raising thunder about the place that we're going. Says he won't have me out there and he's calling Judge Latham everything he can think of!"

Mark had no time to say more for Mr. Whipple himself stepped into the hall. Face to face Don saw a man of medium height, fairly well proportioned, smooth face with little puffy places under the eyes, which themselves wore a haunted expression. Mr. Whipple was collarless and half-dressed, evidently having gotten

in late and arisen much earlier than intended to put his veto upon his son's plans. He walked with a limp, favoring the right foot. All this Don registered in a glance.

"So you're the boy next door?" was the greeting he received in a voice that was cold and biting.

"Yes, sir."

"One of those kind who don't know enough to mind his own business! Got my son mixed up in this Boy Scout stuff! You know what I think of that outfit? Bunch of crooks and highway robbers! Organized to bleed people for money! Stick their noses into folks' private affairs! Make better citizens! Bah! Why'd they take my son in? So they could spy and get the dope on *me!*"

The outburst, to Don, was so absurd that he found himself at a loss to determine whether he should even try to answer it. And if he did, what was there that he could say?

"Why, Mr. Whipple!" he exclaimed, after a tense moment, "You've gotten the wrong impression entirely. Scouting isn't like that!"

"Isn't eh?" interjected Mark's father, furiously, "And you're going camping on Judge Latham's property! . . . Fine bird for you scouts to be hooked up with! A skunk and double-dealer if there ever was one! Playing

with the moneyed interests! That's him! Ever see him send a rich man to the chair? But what did he do to that McClellan gang a year ago? Railroaded 'em all. Gave 'em life and half of 'em as innocent as you or I!"

"How do you know?" ventured Don.

"How do *I* know? . . . Why . . . er . . . any man who followed that trial in the papers could tell they didn't have enough on those birds to convict 'em. But Judge Latham was looking out for his rep. What did he care whether anyone was innocent or guilty? There's men doing time now, paying for the publicity the Judge is getting on being a *great* man!"

There was no sense in arguing with a person in the frame of mind of Mr. Whipple. This subject was evidently one of his "sore" spots and Don thought, as Mark's father was exploding, that he was probably undergoing a mental strain regarding some situation he was in. A man didn't react so personally to happenings he was not connected with unless there was something on his conscience.

"And look at what the Judge is getting set to pull now!" Mr. Whipple raved on, pushing Don back down the hall with the forceful gestures accompanying his explanation, "He came out with a statement in yesterday's paper, that this Stillwell bunch was going to get the limit if

proven guilty. Said he was going out after the whole gang . . . round 'em up all over the country. This was just a starter! Ha! Feeding the papers with all this stuff about his life being threatened. Playing to the gallery. Telling the public—'these are the kind of dangerous characters that are running loose, jeopardizing life and property!' . . . Patting himself on the back and listening to reformers calling him 'one of the greatest moral forces in America today!' . . . Bunk! . . . If he keeps that up much longer he *will* get bumped off and it'll serve him right, too!"

It was here that Don, sorely pressed for replies that would have any effect, suddenly had a flash of inspiration.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Whipple. I don't know what you're talking about but I know Judge Latham personally and, believe me, I'm going to find out from him what you're driving at."

Mark's father stood for a moment, open-mouthed, speechless.

"I don't know whether Mark told you but he's met the Judge, too," said Don, "And he's expecting to see Mark out at camp. I'm going to have a hard time explaining why Mark's not there. Especially since the Judge has taken a personal interest in Mark and wants to do all

he can for him. He'll probably hunt you up to find out what's the matter."

A look of concern came over Mr. Whipple's face. Fingers moved nervously to his chin and lips. He glanced back down the hallway toward Mrs. Whipple who had kept well in the background, regarding her husband sorrowfully.

"You're all wet on the Judge, Dad," said Mark, "You shouldn't have blown off about him that way He's one of the finest guys I ever met."

"You didn't tell me you'd met him," protested Mr. Whipple, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"You didn't give me a chance," answered Mark.

"Well, that don't change my opinion of him none but if you've got your mind set on going, go ahead. Only you'll find out one of these days that your father . . . !"

But Mr. Whipple got no further. With a cry of joy Mark raced down the hall, grabbed his mother, kissed her goodbye, slapped Mr. Whipple on the back as he passed and was gone, pushing Don ahead of him.

CHAPTER XIII

MYSTERIOUS DOINGS

The first two days in camp were spent by Scoutmaster Wheeler and the scouts of Troop 36 in getting settled and getting familiar with surroundings which seemed too wonderful to be true. The spot selected for their camp site was the clearing in which Tenderfoot Mark Whipple had started the fire with his one remaining match. Thanks to the Manhattan Council, tents and camping equipment had been loaned the scouts so that the camp, when established, looked quite professional. A spring, breaking from a rock nearby, and concealed by towering bushes except for its tell-tale gurgling, supplied the scouts with clear, cold water. An ideal location in a place practically untouched by man! A spot where the typical scout could lie in his cot at night and dream dreams of animal eyes staring out at him from the darkness; of queer, creepy cries sounding from the depths of the forest; of strange, inexplainable shadows falling across his tent; of some creature or other moving under his bed; of the distant rumble of

thunder and the warning rustle of the tent flap; of the snickers of a night raiding party, bent on throwing some unsuspecting scout in the lake . . . of all this, and more, could a scout in Troop 36 dream, and then wake up and find it REAL!

Tenderfoot Mark Whipple, soon to become a Second Class Scout, in recognition of his fine work, was given the leadership of a tent. The eight scouts in the patrol under him were those fairly young in the Troop and Scout work. Included, quite naturally, among this eight were Mark's two former gang associates, Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan, as well as Phil Barry and Joe Duncan, tenderfoots who had been taken in the same night with Mark. All in all the eight comprised a group peculiarly congenial to one another, inasmuch as each was striving to take somewhat the same forward steps.

"Boy, I can see already why Mark took so to scouting," Rex confessed to Pat, as they lay in their cots with "lights out" after the first day at camp, "Say, we're not one-two with these fellows when it comes to doing things!"

"Naw, and they do everything just like it was nothing," replied Pat, "Did you see 'em put up that Observation Tower on the moun-

tain today The way they went about picking out the wood and cutting it the right length with their hatchets and putting posts in the ground, and tying poles together with ropes, and building platforms! Do they know their stuff? They could have built that Tower from the top down!"

"And, brother! What a view you get from that lookout's nest!" enthused Rex, "You can see the old Hudson river and she's a good three and a half miles away."

"Yeah, but she doesn't show much till you put the glasses on her," rejoined Pat, "You'd ought to seen. Mr. Wheeler let me take a look."

"What I want to learn is signalling!" declared Rex, "Then I'll get a chance to go up there regular and read all the messages as they come in!"

"Hey!" came a call from the next tent, "You guys shut up in there and go to sleep or we'll douse you in the lake!"

"They mean it, too!" whispered Pat, slipping under his blanket, "We'd better pipe down!"

Scout Ozzie Brinkman was leader of the tent next to Tenderfoot Mark Whipple. And when the second day's tent inspection brought a first award for Whipple's tent and a reprimand

for the condition of the tent he commanded, Ozzie was "good and sore."

"Any time our tent isn't as tidy as his!" he told his patrol.

"All my fault," assumed Lump, "I forgot to put my stuff in a neat pile under the head of my cot."

"It was piled neat enough, I saw it," defended Ozzie.

"Yes, but it was, oh unhappy day, at the foot of the cot," reminded Lump, "And there's all the difference in the world between the foot and the head, even in a human being."

"So we found out," said Scout Ben Tobin, ruefully. "I didn't have my blanket folded any too straight, either. I think that counted against us, too."

"That's all right!" snapped Ozzie, "We don't have to dust our foreheads to tenderfoots—*yet!* You can't tell me they really copped a first. Scoutmaster Wheeler probably handed 'em the prize to encourage 'em."

"How could he?" asked Lump, "When he didn't have anything to do with it. You forget, Mister Man, we picked three of our own members to be the inspection committee and made Scout Don Rader chairman."

Ozzie nodded. "Yeah, but they could take their orders from Mr. Wheeler. Anyhow,

there's something funny somewhere." The chagrined tent leader looked into space, then arriving at a solution, he whirled upon his patrol members. "I've got it! I ought to figured this out sooner. We'll have a fat chance of ever standing good inspection! Know why? . . . Don's peeved at me."

"Aw, forget it. Don doesn't carry grudges."

"He's pulling for Mark and his gang, though. Pulling strong! And he's pulled from the beginning! . . . Watch those babies, now! It's just like I told you! Remember? . . . I said Mark would be working some of his pals in here. And did you see how they acted today? . . . All over the place! Butting into everything we're doing! Mr. Wheeler had to kick 'em off the Observation Tower twice while we were working this afternoon.

"Sure!" grinned Lump, "He'd have kicked me off, too, if I hadn't climbed up when he wasn't looking."

"But you know what I mean!" argued Ozzie, "And wouldn't Don think it was a good joke to rub it into me by playing up Mark's tent against mine? . . . That's just what he's done!"

Lump got up, protesting. "Aw, for gosh

sake, Ozzie! Tune onto another station or stop broadcasting!"

"That's what I say!" objected Scout Al Howard.

"All right," agreed Ozzie, sullenly, "But we want to keep our eyes on that Mark Whipple bunch because I've a sneaking hunch they'll try to pull something before this camp is over!"

The third day in camp was notorious for two unusual happenings—the first, the arrival of a fair visitor to pay her respects; and, second, the reported sighting of three tough-looking men by Scout Don Rader and party, who were said to have beaten it the moment they were seen. The first event, of course, was a happy one. The second set the camp to wondering.

Peggy Latham, daughter of Judge Latham and lover of outdoor life, inspected the first camp ever permitted on her father's property with a great deal of interest. She was full of questions as to the why of this and that and the how of many other things. But that which aroused admiration among the scouts was the quickness with which she caught on.

"She's no dumbbell!" decided Bean, "She's a girl in a thousand. I'll bet she could bait a hook with angleworms!"

"She's a crack shot with a bow and arrow,"

enlightened Don, "Mr. Mackay told me."

"Is that so? Gee!" Every fellow in the Troop was interested at once and the word was passed around in whispers.

"Maybe she'd let us see her shoot!"

"Boy, I'd like to be able to use a bow and arrow myself!"

"Well, why don't you ask her? Maybe she'd teach you!"

"Nothing stirring!"

"Go ahead! What's the matter? Don't you want to be taught anything by a girl? I'd go in a second if I wanted to learn!" declared Lump.

"Would you?"

"Sure!"

"Say, Miss Latham," proposed Don, mischievously, "Lump here is just dying to learn how to shoot the bow and arrow. Would you mind showing him some time . . . ?"

"Oh, great jumping sassafras!" groaned Lump, "Miss Latham, I don't know how Don ever got such an idea! I said I'd like to see *you* shoot but I didn't say I wanted to shoot *myself.*"

Peggy nodded, laughing. "I understand."

"I shouldn't think he *would* want to *shoot himself!*" punned Sly.

"I have a target range back of the house,"

suggested Peggy, "If any of you fellows would like to try it you're welcome to come over any time."

"Gee! Thanks a lot!"

"We'll be taking you up on that."

And when Peggy departed, running lightly and sure-footedly up the rocks to the elevation on which the Latham home was built, approving glances followed her.

"You fellows didn't get me right," explained Lump, aggrievedly, "What I really was trying to tell her was that I wouldn't object if she put an arrow right through my heart!"

"Oh! In the lake for him!" cried Bean.

"Hold on!" ordered Sly, "And you can throw me in with him . . . because Miss Latham can eat my burned steak and potatoes any time!"

Which wisecracks pretty well represented the surprising views of the Troop toward one of the opposite sex in a neck of the woods where a girl was not ordinarily supposed to shine!

The sighting of the tough-looking men was quite another story. It came later in the day, around four-thirty in the afternoon, to be exact, and Scout Don Rader was just leading a party of scouts back from a trailing jaunt when the

characters crossed their path. The men were evidently as astonished to encounter the boys as the scouts were to see them. Both stared at each other, at probably twenty paces, before the men, mumbling to themselves, moved on.

"What you know about that? Boy Scouts?" one of them was heard to remark.

In reporting the meeting, Scout Rader was able to furnish a detailed description of each of the three men, gained through piecing together and checking the observations of all members of his party.

"What do you suppose individuals like that could be doing around here?" asked Sly.

"Probably passing through," suggested Bean, "Just plain trespassers!"

And so the matter rested.

In issuing camp equipment to Troop 36 for its outing, the Manhattan Council unfortunately lacked enough good blankets to go around, being forced to fill in with some badly used ones. These, in turn, were handed out to the scouts unlucky enough to draw them, with the proper apologies. Too bad but it just couldn't be helped. If there was a hole in your blanket, be thankful for the ventilation it afforded. If the ends of it were tattered and tickled your neck so you had a hard time sleeping, think

how much worse off you'd be if you didn't have any neck to be tickled. There was always a bright way of looking at things even if the bright way was dark.

In the case of the worn blankets, the lowly tenderfoots were the ones who drew them and carried them to their cots, uncomplaining. Each tenderfoot may have had his tender thoughts on the subject but he discreetly said nothing. And Scout Mark Whipple had made the best of it with the worst blanket of the lot by remarking that, if there'd been one more hole in it there wouldn't have been any blanket at all.

Scout Ozzie Brinkman, however, with the fellows in his tent blessed with brand new blankets, suddenly decided, privately and alone, that his patrol was having too much of a good thing.

"I'll watch my chance and exchange these good blankets for the bum ones in Whipple's tent," designed Ozzie, "And then raise a fuss over Tent Number Three's stealing them!"

Here was an iron-clad way of putting one over on the former gang leader, his pals and the innocent other members of the tent. Nobody would certainly accuse anybody in the Brinkman tent of swiping old blankets in exchange for new. But there was logic in figuring

that Scout Whipple's bunch, tired of sleeping under ragged coverings, had suddenly gone on a rampage and seized property belonging to others. In which case, such an unfair exchange would be positively regarded as robbery.

Watching his chance, Ozzie was able to return to his tent when no one was around and to slip in and out of it as well as in and out of the tent next to his, with his arms laden with bundles both ways. And when he had finished, lo—that which had been tattered and torn in the tenderfoots' tent was now the king's horses. Cinderella was indeed ready to go to the ball. But, in Ozzie's own tent, alas and alack! what once had been beautiful was now ugly. In appearance the blankets which now adorned the cots were past the fatal hour of midnight, needing badly the touch of a fairy godmother's wand.

"Oh, boy! Won't there be fireworks when *this* is discovered!" grinned Ozzie, "I'll get away now and give some of the other guys a chance to get back first!"

Half an hour later a great wailing and gnashing of teeth went up as a tired Lump, in company with Scouts Ben Tobin and Al Howard, returned from a hunt for a bluebird's nest. Their spirits were low to begin with, no nest having been found, and then to find that their

own nests had been uncouthly feathered . . . well, this was the straw that broke in two in the middle!

"Who's been changing the blankets on my bed?" demanded Lump, tearing a page from the mythical history of the Three Bears.

"And who's been swiping the blanket off *my* bed?" howled Ben.

"And somebody's taken my brand new blanket and left me the most terrible one of all in its place!" announced Al, in a high, quavering voice as though he were about to break down and cry.

The rumpus raised by these three "blanketeers" soon brought all those then in camp to their tent, with Tent Leader Ozzie Brinkman leading the pack.

"What's this?" he wanted to know, "What's up?"

"Someone's taken foul advantage of us!" declared Lump, pointing about the tent at the mounds of poor blankets.

"Well, what do you know about that?" exclaimed Ozzie, "We'll get to the bottom of this, believe me!"

The tent leader walked over on the pretense of examining the blankets closely.

"Why! These look like the ones belonging

to Whipple's tent!" he announced, loudly, "Maybe they've got ours!"

Just then Tenderfoot Mark Whipple arrived on the scene, having come in from a study of plants which he had made with Don. He was naturally curious to know what was going on.

"What you selling?" he asked joshingly of Ozzie, seeing that the excitement seemed to be centered about them. Don, just behind Mark, looked on, wonderingly.

"Hey! You're the guy we're looking for!" fired back Ozzie, "You fellows got our blankets?"

Mark laughed.

"What do *we* want with your blankets?" he retorted, in what was intended as humor. "We got some *swell* ones of our own!"

"Let's have a look!" proposed Ozzie, starting toward Mark's tent.

At this juncture Scoutmaster Wheeler put in his appearance, demanding to know the cause of the disturbance.

"Somebody's lifted our blankets," Ozzie explained, "and shoved us some old ones. We're going to find out if . . ."

"Stay out of my tent!" ordered Mark, as Rex and Pat approached, "You've no right in there!"

"What are they after?" asked Rex, taking his stand beside Mark.

"Aw, they're trying to make out we copped their blankets!"

"What a nerve!" boiled Pat.

"We'll settle this thing, fellows," interceded Scoutmaster Wheeler, "All try to talk at once and see how funny you sound. Ozzie, Mark was right. You've no business in his tent. Stay out! . . . Mark, round up all your bunch and get 'em in your tent right away."

"Yes, sir!"

By this time all eight members were on hand so they simply had to step inside. Scoutmaster Wheeler followed. The rest of the Troop remained without, speculating as to the who, what and why of the incident.

The occupants of Mark Whipple's tent, having loudly asserted their innocence, were destined for a rude shock when they discovered themselves to be in possession of brand new blankets. As they stared, dumbfounded, Scoutmaster Wheeler, satisfying himself with one glance, turned to the group.

"Fellows, you know these blankets aren't yours. They're from Brinkman's tent. How'd they get here?"

The tent members looked from one to the

other, their expressions registering helplessness and perplexity.

"Search me!" answered Mark.

"*Whipple?*" said Scoutmaster Wheeler, eyeing the tent leader, severely.

"On my honor!" replied Mark, meeting the Scoutmaster's gaze unflinchingly.

"You fellows?" The Scoutmaster glanced about at the others in the tent. "Which ones?"

"Not me!"

"Not me, sir!"

"Nor me!"

And so it went, around the circle.

"We didn't have anything to do with it, sir!" declared Rex.

"Some of you must have!" insisted the Scoutmaster, "Never mind. I'll find out. And it'll go hard with the fellow who's trying to shield himself or others. Meanwhile, you fellows are confined to your tent for tonight."

Scoutmaster Wheeler turned and left abruptly. With his departure came a storm of protest. And outside could be heard excited discussion, Ozzie's voice rising over all, and then—Ozzie's laugh.

"Oh, how I love that guy!" burst out Mark, then checked himself, regretfully. "I didn't mean that," he added, and, realizing the humor

in this retraction, further tempered it by saying, "At least, the way it sounded."

But Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan were hopping mad. This was a downright low, dirty trick and they intended to tell the world about it.

"Gee!" reflected one of the soberer members of the tent, "Special doings tonight, too . . . our first camp fire . . . and we miss it!"

"Never mind! We'll get even!" promised Rex.

"Cut that kind of talk!" warned Mark, "Do you guys swear to me you didn't do it?"

"Course we didn't do it! Think we'd get sore over nothing?"

"All right, then," accepted their former gang leader, "I'll stick by you till the last dog's hung!"

"And that dog's going to be Ozzie Brinkman!" declared Pat.

"Shake on it!" called Rex, putting out his hand.

CHAPTER XIV

A CLEAN BREAST OF THINGS

Bombs bursting in air! Gave proof through the night that the camp was still there! A peaceful little settlement suddenly rocketed and riddled by civil war! And all had not calmed down by break of day. No, not by any small manner of means!

It was the fifth day of camp, incidentally, and the scouts were commencing to take on a veteran attitude. Those who had permitted mosquitoes to feast off them the first couple nights had drawn in their parking spaces. Others who had exposed various parts of their body not wisely but well to the rays of old Sol were going around dodging uplifted hands and peeling off white hunks of skin. Still others, suffering from indigestion, had spent hours in desperate attempts to improve their cooking. And practically all had been forced to acclimate themselves to the changes in temperature between darkness and dawn so that, at regular intervals, bed covers were pulled up subcon-

sciously. Veterans? They were veterans in every pore!

Scoutmaster Wheeler dropped around to the tenderfoots' tent in the morning to inquire if any of the fellows therein had experienced a change of mind. Usually an overnight chance to think things over brought the desired results. But, this time, to the Scoutmaster's surprise, he found a tent united in its original declaration. "Not guilty!" Impressed by the earnestness as well as the steadfastness of denial, Scoutmaster Wheeler decided to be more lenient until he had gone into the case further. Accordingly, he released the tent members on probation.

"You're out on your honor," he told them, "When any of you get ready to come to me and spill the real story, you know where to find me."

But the morning passed without Scoutmaster Wheeler being visited which convinced him more and more that he was confronted with a mystery. Camp duties kept him, however, from being able to spend much time in thought or investigation of it.

Don, at his earliest opportunity, sought out and had a talk with Mark.

"What's the real dope?" he asked.

"We didn't do it!" answered Mark.

"Then who would?" demanded Don, frankly.

Mark hesitated.

"I'd rather not say," he replied.

"I'll say it for you," rejoined Don, "Ozzie!"

"Well," considered Mark, "Why not?"

"I thought that's the way you had it figured," said Don, "But I hardly think so. I'll tell you why. Ozzie's put in for his Eagle and he wouldn't run the risk of spoiling his chances. An Eagle's too tough to get."

"All right," snapped Mark, "I'm not saying who did it. Let some of the wise guys around here find out. Good time to do some tracking. Watson, the magnifying glass! Maybe there's some finger prints on the blankets!"

The late afternoon always found few in camp and this afternoon was no exception. When it looked as though practically everyone was busy about something elsewhere, two figures arose from a small ravine in which they had been hiding and hurried back to camp.

"Haven't much time," said the larger of the two, "But, boy, we'll do plenty in the time we've got!"

"I'll say!" agreed the smaller one, as the

two entered Ozzie Brinkman's tent, "When we get through with this place they'll think a wrecking crew's hit it!"

And then the two proceeded to do a classic job of tearing apart as well as down. They ripped everything they could get their hands on and threw things around, dumping the contents out of bags and mixing everybody's stuff into one grand pile. Then they jumped on the beds till they crashed and finally, as a last revengeful gesture, cut the guy ropes and let the tent down. With one last and gleeful look at their work of cyclonic destruction, the two of them hied it for the woods again, the larger of the vandals exclaiming as he ran: "Just wait till those babies see that! They'll put up a *real* holler this time!"

Scout Lump Hogan, being interested in insects since, as he said, "he had been bitten by so many," had gone out on an expedition of his own for the purpose of securing as many specimens as possible. And it was, in returning to camp with a hatful of butterflies, moths and beetles that Lump espied two familiar figures running from camp.

"Hello!" thought Lump, "What's going on here? What are they running from? . . . Maybe I'll want to run, too!"

But after waiting a minute for something

startling to turn up, Lump decided that he could continue his way in to camp without any great danger.

"If it's robbers," he decided, "They can have my life but they can't take the bugs. I had too darn much trouble catching 'em!"

When Lump arrived within seeing distance of his tent, however, he let out a high-singing whistle which sounded something like a seventeen year locust.

"Jumping juniper berries! Everything's ruined!"

He lifted a section of the tent and peered under at the mass of wreckage.

"And I know who did this!" he said, slowly, gritting his teeth, "Well, what *won't* happen to those guys!"

Something very serious had occurred now. Obviously, actual property damage was far more contemptible than an exchange of blankets for the exchange might have been motivated by a distorted idea of fun while the contents of a tent could not be destroyed without definite malicious intent. No question about it. Somebody was going to pay and pay dearly for this!

It was a wildly excited troop that convened its scattered forces some forty minutes later to witness the latest sensational episode in the

feud now openly existing between the Brinkman and Whipple tents. Charges and counter charges flew backwards and forwards. Everyone appeared to be making accusations; no one apparently could prove any.

"There's the guilty ones!" Lump pointed out, naming Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan but Rex and Pat staunchly denied complicity.

Mark, however, after having given everyone a chance to air their views or make confessions, stepped quietly forward, addressing Scoutmaster Wheeler.

"We're guilty all right," he announced, "Our tent did it. I'm tent leader so I'll take the blame. What's the medicine?"

The Scoutmaster hesitated.

"Isn't anyone else going to own up?" he asked, "Going to let your leader carry the whole load?"

Not an answer.

"All right, Whipple! Surrender your badge!"

The former gang leader winced but did as instructed, standing at attention the while.

"Sorry there's no real place of detention for you," said the Scoutmaster, "But for now you're to use the supply tent. Take your blanket down there at once and remain there until further orders from me."

"Yes, sir!"

Scout Whipple started to salute, then thought better of it. He had been shorn—temporarily, at least—of his standing as a scout. It might be forever. And it occurerd to him that a salute under such circumstances would be but adding insult.

'Well, fellows," said Ozzie Brinkman, to the members of his tent when things had cooled down somewhat, "I guess you'll admit now that there was something in what I predicted. Telling you to keep your eyes on that bunch. They've shown themselves up for what they are this time!"

There was an air of satisfaction in Ozzie's voice. And the air was increased when his tent members, glumly sorting through the debris, in search of personal effects, had nothing to say in reply.

At sight of Scout Don Rader's passing, Ozzie even condescended to address him. His voice had all the tone of an "I told you so" with the added inference that one who had been blind was being charitably forgiven.

"You see?" shot Ozzie, striving to rub it in, "What you get from Mud Gutters!"

Don's glance at Ozzie was penetrating.

"I'm seeing lots of things," he rejoined, bitingly.

Ozzie looked puzzled. "Now, what did he mean by that?" he asked himself, uneasily.

Scoutmaster Wheeler's suspension of scout privileges to Mark Whipple was by no means intended to be construed as final action in this disgraceful matter. The Manhattan Council would also undoubtedly have plenty to say with regard not only to the conduct of the scouts concerned but the damage done to their property.

The Scoutmaster was not satisfied, however, with one fellow's having assumed the brunt of all the trouble and so, following mess, he went to the Whipple tent where the patrol, minus its leader, was again confined to "quarters."

"I've come to ask you fellows one question," announced Scoutmaster Wheeler, "And if there's even a spark of scouting left in you, you're going to come clean."

The tent members sat or lay about with expressions of dejection and resentment.

"I can understand how swearing, on your honor, to uphold the Scout Oath and Law might not mean anything to some of you," continued the Scoutmaster, "There are fellows who've got the mistaken idea there's a bigger kick in being rowdies and hell raisers than men! . . . But, what I can't understand is this . . ." And here the Scoutmaster

paused, as Rex and Pat, Mark's two former gang members, looked up at him, curiously. "I *can't* understand," repeated Scoutmaster Wheeler, "How any fellows, with any sense of loyalty to a pal . . . a pal who's pledged for their name and honor . . . who's gone on record that these fellows can be trusted . . . that they've got *guts* enough to play the game square . . . I can't understand WHY these same fellows would stoop even beneath honor . . . and beneath individual loyalty . . . to let the pal who's stood up for them take *their* stab in the back!"

Rex and Pat looked at one another, exchanging smirking smiles, but neither of them would face the eyes of their indignant maligner.

"Why, even a gangster, a man rotten to the core, has more sense of loyalty and decency than that!" continued the Scoutmaster, cuttingly, "Hundreds of gangsters have gone to their death rather than betray a pal. Others have burned in the chair. And those gangsters *had* something! A spirit—which if they'd used right through life would have made them worth something to the world! Don't forget! A fellow, no matter how dirty neck he is, if he's got the sand to take what's coming to him, is at least playing the game square as he sees

it! A yellow dog wouldn't bite its own kind to save itself!"

Never before had Rex or Pat or any of the other tent members ever heard anything approaching this tongue-lashing. It was a new and stinging experience for them, so much so that each began, despite himself, to search his own soul, with thoughts not only of his present conduct but his doubtful doings of the past. And, when Scoutmaster Wheeler had finished, every member of the patrol wore an expression of guilt!

The Scoutmaster had not minced words and now he did not intend to mince time. He waited a few palpitating seconds to give anyone in the tent a chance to volunteer and, getting no response save a silence which, to his listeners, was agonizing, the Scoutmaster turned on his heel to leave the tent. It was here that Pat and Rex, nodding anxiously at each other, cried out, hoarsely, "Wait!"

As Scoutmaster Wheeler swung about to confront them, both wet their lips nervously and each waited for the other to speak.

"We did it!" blurted out Rex, finally, "Pat and I. Nobody else was in on it. Mark isn't to blame. We sneaked back to camp when no one was around and done the job. We knew it was wrong but we figured we didn't have to

take any more dirt from that bird Ozzie. He tried to frame us . . . make us look bad . . ."

"I'll say he did!" took up Pat. "He's had it in for Mark, too. But Mark wouldn't do nothing! So we decided it was up to us! . . . We're sorry all right . . . for Mark's sake. They don't come any better than he is! But that guy Ozzie is a skunk!"

"See here!" reprimanded the Scoutmaster, "That kind of talk isn't getting you any place. If you're going to come through, come through clean. And while you're about it, you might as well clear up that little matter of the blankets!"

Rex raised up from his cot in protest.

"We didn't do that, sir!"

"Not much! You don't ring that off on us!"

"That's what started us, Mr. Wheeler! If that job hadn't been pulled . . . !"

The Scoutmaster was unyielding, convinced now that he had located the seat of all the trouble.

"You're bound to be found out sooner or later," he reminded, sternly, "And you'll come off a lot better making a clean breast of the whole business!"

Rex and Pat looked at one another considerингly.

"Aw, what's the diff?" decided Rex, talking

in Pat's ear, "They think we did it, anyway. We might as well go the whole hog!"

Pat shrugged his shoulders.

"All right, Mr. Wheeler, what do you want us to do about it?"

"First, give me your badges," ordered the Scoutmaster.

The order was obeyed, other tent members looking on feelingly.

"Next, I want you to come down to the camp fire tonight and publicly apologize to the whole troop."

Rex and Pat flinched at this.

"And then you're to return to your tent and remain here until further orders!"

"Will we be kicked out of scouting, sir?" asked Rex, fearsomely.

"Can't tell you yet. The Manhattan Council will have something to say about this. But one thing's certain. If you stick you'll have to work off the damage you've done . . . pay it all back."

"We want to stick!" pleaded Pat, earnestly. "Anything you say, Mr. Wheeler!"

Camp fire confessions! With the waters of the lake mirroring up the circle of faces and each fellow looking at himself, wondering sheepishly and ashamedly how he ever could

have been so small and so mean as to have done what he did. The stars and the moon above, close up against God's heaven, making each scout feel even smaller. How could a person ever take advantage of such a marvelous thing as creation . . . for he certainly *was* taking advantage of some portion of creation every time he did some low and contemptible thing! The universe itself was so big and unconscious of anyone's wrong-doing. That was the humiliating thing about it. The universe didn't care. A fellow could stub his toe on a rock and the rock wouldn't even feel it. But the fellow would! There was the rub! Whatever a person did always came back on him . . . like a boomerang! But if a fellow got things off his chest, made things right with God and anybody or anything he'd harmed in any way, then there couldn't be any more boomerangs. He could look up at the stars and the moon and feel that he was somehow in tune with the universe . . . that his life was hitched up to a great infinite power that could help him to do big things. Oh, the thousands of eyes that have smarted and rimmed with moisture, their redness being blamed on the smoke from the fire! And the sober resolvings that have come from lips which had uttered honor-bound promises only to be broken! But

this was life, expressing itself in striving and failing and striving again. That was it—*striving again!* Like building the Observation Tower on the mountain side. Lots of hard work and mistakes in building but once it was builded . . . there it stood . . . up and above everything else around it . . . something to be proud of and a place to look from that gave a person a different, more inspiring view of things.

The confessions made this night at the camp fire gathering of Troop 36 were not greatly unlike the confessions made at countless other camp fires. A confession was a confession and the inner feeling was the same no matter what soul it poured from. The big thing was that the fellow confessing was sorry for the mistake he had made, for having put the wrong piece of material in the tower he hoped to make of his life, and that by his resolving to throw out the deadwood, he intended to go on building up again. The mountain top was to be reached only by climbing.

And so, when Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan stood haltingly before their fellows and told simple, straightforward stories of their wrongdoings, exonerating everyone else but themselves and asking . . . pleading to be given

one more chance, where was there a scout who could say them "Nay!"?

There was one scout, however, who—when he heard the two gang members take credit for the swapping of the blankets, bowed his head and moved back beyond the accusing fingers of the fire. But just moving back was not enough to save him from a burning feeling of remorse. He had been dishonest. A cheat. And something worse . . . something he couldn't quite define . . . unnameable! Trying to make out to others he was something he was not! Trying to make others look bad by comparison! Trying to put things over he knew weren't right! And he, Ozzie Brinkman, had had the gall to apply for his Eagle!

"Mr. Wheeler!"

Those about the camp fire were startled by the suddenness of the exclamation and the sight of Ozzie advancing from the shadows into the full glare of the flames.

"What is it, Ozzie?"

"There's something I'd like to say, sir," replied a voice which trembled slightly. The flickering light of the fire, playing across Ozzie's face, revealed it to be tense and haggard. As he cleared his throat, obviously striving for the composure to go through with

whatever he had to say, those looking on stirred uncomfortably.

"Fellows," spoke Ozzie, brokenly, "I've been sitting here listening . . . and thinking . . . and trying to figure out why I . . . why I've said some things and done some things that I have. But the more I try to think, the less I can figure. So I guess I can't claim any alibi. I'm just plain *rotten!*" Ozzie struggled for a moment before going on.

Rex and Pat, former gang members, nudged each other significantly. Scout Don Rader leaned forward.

"First off," said Ozzie, forcing himself to continue, "Remember when Mr. Wheeler sent me out with Sly and Bean to make these pick-ups in the river . . . and I came back to shore . . . and said I'd had a cramp? . . . Well, there wasn't any cramp. I was just yellow!"

Troop members looked their surprise.

Ozzie moistened his lips, pressing on. "I was so scared I could hardly swim. I'd seen how Mark and Rex and Pat were grabbing at each other and I kept thinking . . . 'what if they'd grab me that way and pull me down? . . . What chance would I have? . . . I'd be a goner!' . . . And I commenced figuring on how I could get out of it and

still look good. . . . Oh, well . . . you know the rest!"

Ozzie shifted his position, the smoke from the fire bothering his throat.

"I don't have to tell you guys, either, what I thought of Mark Whipple and his gang and how I bucked any of 'em joining us," he resumed, "I was sore at Don's coming into the troop, too, and making so popular. And when he got behind Mark for membership I vowed to myself I'd prove to Don and all you fellows that a Mud Gutter couldn't ever make a good scout!"

Ozzie's confession was beginning to throw a light upon many things now. He was sparing nothing which made each revelation increasingly hard. Scoutmaster Wheeler sat just outside the circle, on a log, hands clasped over one knee, staring fixedly into the fire.

"But when Rex and Pat got up here, before you all, and . . . and came clean with everything . . . even taking the blame for what happened to the blankets . . ." Ozzie drew a quick, choking breath and tears brimmed his eyes. He knuckled them out as though vexed at himself for his show of feeling. "Fellows, I don't want Rex and Pat and Mark . . . and the other Tenderfoots here to get a wrong idea of scouting on account of me.

I've been the trouble maker in this Troop. And if anyone's figured we were all like this underneath, they can kill that right now."

The camp fire, having flared brightly, now began to die down and shadows fell across Ozzie's face.

"I was the one who swapped the blankets and trumped up the charges on Mark Whipple's tent! I don't have to go into what happened after that. It's me, though, who ought to get the biggest part of the blame. Me, who was going to keep still and let Mark and Rex and Pat be the goats! But, fellows, I know what real scouting is, even if I haven't lived it in lots of ways . . . and I want to apologize to Rex Eggers and Pat Dugan and Mark Whipple. If they're not real scouts for being willing to stand up and take medicine that shouldn't be coming to 'em, then I've never met any."

With a ripping motion, Scout Ozzie Brinkman tore his First Class Badge from his shirt front and, walking over, handed it to Scoutmaster Wheeler.

"There you are, sir," he said. "This is kissing goodbye to my Eagle, too, but I couldn't have got any fun out of having it. Perhaps you won't want me in the troop after this."

A hushed silence fell over the circle, broken

only by the dying crackle of the fire. Each scout sat, experiencing feelings which would remain forever beyond expression. Ozzie's clean breast of things had somehow brought them all closer together . . . had cleared an atmosphere which had rapidly been growing unbearable . . . and had removed all misunderstandings.

"You'll have to take your punishment," spoke Scoutmaster Wheeler, to the humbled scout before him, "But I just want to say this much, Ozzie, to your credit. You are not quite the coward you think you are. If you had been you could have protected yourself with lies and pretense and we might never have been the wiser. But I know, and every other fellow here knows, what a man it takes to stand up here and admit a wrong!"

It was now about time for the camp fire to end and, the tension finally broken, scouts relaxed with sighs of relief. But their relaxation was to be for the briefest moment only, for Scout Don Rader, his attention suddenly attracted by the sharp snapping of a twig, looked over his shoulder to behold, caught in a final flare-up reflection of the fire, the face of one of the tough-looking characters he had run across several days before!

CHAPTER XV

AN ALARMING DISAPPEARANCE

On seeing the strange face, Don immediately spread the alarm and, within a few seconds, scouts were searching the entire camp site, diffusing the darkness with the concentrated beams of flashlights, but their hunt revealed them nothing.

"You must have been seeing things," Scoutmaster Wheeler joshed Don, finally, "We've gone over this territory like a fine tooth comb and not a sign of anybody. What makes you think, anyway, that the face you saw belonged to one of the men seen the other day?"

"No particular feature," admitted Don, "Just a general impression. But I'm positive . . . !"

"Well, sleep on it," advised the Scoutmaster, smiling, "And see if you're just as positive in the morning."

"I'll find tracks in the morning," Don was willing to guarantee, "This hard ground our camp's on doesn't track very well."

"All right," laughed Scoutmaster Wheeler,

"I hope this strange man, whoever he is, gives you boys some good practice. Good night!"

But before turning in the Scoutmaster saw to it that Mark Whipple was restored to the leadership of his tent while Ozzie, Rex and Pat were made to change places with him in the supply tent which had now come to be known as "the guardhouse."

The night passed peacefully enough despite the "scare," which brought a dramatic ending to the camp fire, and with the morning Lump humorously reported, "All is quiet along the Potomac."

Good natured fun was poked at Scout Don Rader by troop members, especially by those who had not been in the party with him when the tough characters were encountered.

"All right!" Don answered seriously, "You guys mark my words, those birds are still around here and, unless I miss a good guess, we're going to see more of 'em!"

"I never saw a fellow who liked to track any better than Don anyhow," kidded Lump, "And he's trying darn hard to figure out something to make tracking exciting! So don't be too rough on him, guys. Let the poor boy have his fun."

Don did spend considerable of the morning

scouting around the camp site, studying the ground carefully as well as the underbrush. He even picked up fallen leaves and examined them.

"What do you think you can do, make out the exact minute, day and year that leaf fell off the tree?" Sly wanted to know.

Don grinned. "No," he replied, "I'm trying to find out whether it's fallen off the tree yet. Can you help me?"

"Oh, my gosh!" groaned Sly, and let him alone.

Later in the morning most of the troop paid the promised visit to the daughter of Judge Latham, and Peggy very graciously let them see her use the bow and arrow, bringing rounds of enthusiastic applause at her excellent marksmanship. She completely won their hearts when she permitted each scout to try his hand and there were roars of laughter as some arrows flew wide of the mark and some missed the target entirely.

"If we shoot here very long we'll lose all your arrows for you," said Sly.

Which didn't seem far from the truth!

It was Saturday and Judge Latham was expected out for the week-end. The state's case against the famous Stillwell gang was about

to go the jury, ending what had been an excessively bitter and heated trial.

"If Daddy's not too tired when he gets here, I'll bring him over for awhile," said Peggy, "He's been wanting to see you all ever since you've been out here but he's been too awful busy."

The scouts assured her they had been equally desirous of seeing her father and thanking him for the splendid camping site he had afforded them. Mr. Mackay was expected out also, he having sent word that the whole troop was commanded to have dinner at his home on Sunday!

Mark Whipple, having passed all tests required for qualification as a Second Class Scout, had been studying the Semaphore Code while at camp, as a step toward the attainment of his First Class rating. And it was, to try out the results of this study, that he departed the camp in the early afternoon with his faithful instructor, Don Rader.

"I'm a darn nuisance, I know," he grinned. "But someone's got to teach me and it might as well be you."

"Evidently!" observed Don, dryly, "Lately I've been wondering if a guy isn't better off who doesn't know so much."

"Just for that, what city's the capital of North Dakota?" flung back Mark.

"Good night!" exclaimed Don, "Be reasonable!"

"Mean to tell me you don't know a little thing like that?" scoffed Mark, "You don't know so much!"

Two wearisome hours were spent in the woods a half mile beyond the Latham home as a Tenderfoot in reality, a Second Class Scout in realization, and a First Class Scout in aspiration, repeated over and over again the sending of simple messages.

"Quit fouling your flag!" Don would call, "Don't bring your staff down in a straight line . . . loop it!"

And Mark, nursing his exasperation, would make another try. But in a moment he would get a bawling out for jerking or whipping the flag, being compelled to start all over. And so on and so on in what seemed a couple of ad infinitums!

When finally Don signalled back the two words, "Good work!" which took Mark four sendings to make out, he was ready to call it a day.

On the way back to camp Don and Mark passed within a couple hundred yards of the

Latham home, barely visibly through the trees.

"Certainly wonderful out here!" Mark was impelled to declare again for about the *umptieth* time.

"I never saw a place equal to it," Don replied, eyes toward the ground. "Hello! What's this?"

Stooping Don picked up a small white object.

"Huh! Peggy's handkerchief!"

"Gee whiz! We'll have to hurry up and return it to her!" joshed Mark, "She won't be able to blow her nose!"

But Don's eyes had detected something else, heavy footprints in soft earth, *men's footprints!*

"Look here!" he called, excitedly, and bent down to examine the impressions. The soft earth extended to a clump of dense bushes beside a winding path on which Peggy's handkerchief had been found.

"See!" directed Don, "Those footprints lead back to behind these bushes. There's three pair of them! Those men I saw that day, I'll bet anything!"

"Three pair of footprints!" repeated Mark, studying the tracks, "Looks like the same feet to me."

"Measure 'em," ordered Don, "You'll find some of them are shorter and longer than the

others. And look back here!" In back of the bushes the grass and plant life was trampled, having a wallowed-in look as though it had been lain upon for a considerable period. There were some scraps of food and a piece of New York City newspaper which Don seized, glancing for a date line.

"August third!" he cried, "The very day we spotted those men. They evidently came out here on that day, from New York, and brought the paper with them. And behind these bushes was plainly their hangout. It's also on a direct line with Judge Latham's home which you can see from here . . . !"

Mark looked at Don, not knowing exactly what to make of all this.

"That's darn good deducing," he said, "But why so excited?"

"Because, you poor goof!" cried Don, "I've a hunch those kind of characters haven't been hanging around here for any good. And, more than that, it looks to me as though they'd already done something with Peggy!"

"What?" Mark was interested enough now. He began to look about him, wide-eyed.

"Figure it out for yourself," directed Don, "Wouldn't this be a swell place to have someone jump out on you unawares? And look where I picked up the handkerchief, just beyond

the bushes, about where Peggy'd have been by the time they could reach her. Now let's see . . . yes! Here's her footprint! It's almost lost, though, there's so many men's footprints around her. Look! One of the men came around the bush one way and two the other!"

"Boy, how you see all those things is beyond me!" exclaimed Don, "But they're there all right! . . . Say, what if she was kidnapped?"

"Looks like she *was!*" declared Don, "See! Here's her footprints up to here. Then they disappear. Those men must have carried her!"

Don made a careful examination of footprints leading from the spot in front of the bushes which was almost over-run with footmarks.

"They *did* carry her!" he announced, feverishly.

Mark looked his incredulity.

"How the Sam Hill do you make that out?"

"Because the footprints are deeper from this spot on!" answered Don, "Which means that the men were weighted down with . . . well . . . something!"

By this time Don was greatly concerned. But Mark, knowing Don's enthusiasm for tracking, checked his own growing interest long enough to make a suggestion.

"Don't you think, Don, before getting any more worked up over this thing, we ought to run over to Judge Latham's and find out if Peggy is there?"

"That's a good idea!" approved Don, "Let's go!"

The servants were the only ones at the house. Mrs. Latham had gone to the city and was expected back with the Judge around five o'clock. Peggy had left around two-thirty for one of her many hikes about the estate. Was there anything they could do for the boys?

"No thank you!" Don replied, turning from the house without revealing to the servants his fears. Of course he could still be wrong. Anyone could be wrong. But the evidence thus far seemed to build up perfectly. "Our first move is to report to Scoutmaster Wheeler!" he decided, and with Mark, set off for camp on the double-quick.

"So Peggy left the house at two-thirty?" he calculated as he ran, "And it's about a quarter to four now. If she's been kidnapped they haven't got a start on us of more than an hour!"

Seven minutes later two breathless scouts arrived in camp, attracting much attention by their excited actions.

"Peggy! We think she's been k-k-kidnapped!" gasped Don.

"Looks that way!" supplied Mark, incoherently, "She isn't home!"

"Calm down, you fellows!" commanded Scoutmaster Wheeler, laughing, "Which one of you saw the snake?"

Earnestly, and in the face of amused glances, Don gasped out his story, exhibiting the handkerchief and describing what he regarded as suspicious circumstantial evidence.

"All right, I'll tell you what we'll do," agreed the Scoutmaster, good-naturedly, "You fellows believe you've discovered something. Go to it! Let the whole troop go out in pairs and see what you fellows can round up. Be good training if nothing else. I'll stay here with a couple of lieutenants and be central reporting station. We'll put a man up in the Observation Tower to take any signals and I'll be there with my field glasses and make notes on whatever's turned in. How's that hit you?"

"Great!"

"Where's the trail begin, Don?"

"Nothing stirring! You fellows lay off my trail. Mark and I are going to follow it. Too many of you are liable to destroy important evidence! Start out around Judge Latham's home and pick up your own dope."

"I knew it!" wailed Lump. "I knew he'd hatch a regular bear story to start work on sooner or later. Peggy kidnapped! I couldn't have thought up a better one myself!"

From the supply tent three envious youths, under suspension, watched wild preparations being made for this wholesale tracking expedition. Their confinement together had gone a long way toward getting them better acquainted.

"Gee, wish we were in on that!" said Rex, wistfully.

"Oh, well," said Ozzie, philosophically, "Since we're not, you might as well get back to work on your signalling. Now let's see you go through the alphabet again!"

"Gosh, I don't know whether I can or not," replied Rex, with longing glances at the departing scouts, "Afraid all I could spell now would be 'Peggy!' "

With troop members ready to depart, Scoutmaster Wheeler issued final instructions.

"About your signalling!" he shouted, "None of this three thousand word stuff. Send us a Paul Revere—one if by night and two if by day! If you hit real trouble, give me the sign and I'll come running. I'll give you fellows two hours. Report back here by that time or I'll come out after you. Goodbye, boys—and

here's hoping there's enough villains to go around!"

The other scouts might be taking this thing as more or less of a lark, including the Scoutmaster, but not Don! The moment preparations were completed he was urging Mark to make all possible speed back to the spot they had left. Their haste placed other pairs of scouts far in the rear.

"This isn't tracking," complained Lump, watching after them, "It's a marathon race!"

"If she's really been kidnapped it's darn serious!" breathed Don, as he ran, "And the sooner we get her trail, the better!"

"You said it!" Mark agreed.

Arrived at the spot where Don had visualized Peggy's possible abduction, difficulties were encountered at the start. The soft earth vanished in a few paces and all traces of footprints or other signs were lost on the hard ground so that it could not be determined, for a certainty, in what direction the party had gone.

"Have to make a *cast*," Don decided.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I'll show you."

Dropping Peggy's handkerchief at the spot where tracks could last be distinguished, Don

commenced working around it in an ever widening circle, using the handkerchief as a center until he was describing an arc some fifty yards away. Mark, watching him, quickly caught on, and followed. And it was Mark who, his observing faculties developing under this training, announced the first discovery.

"Here!" he cried, picking something up, "Does this help? A hairpin!"

Don came running over at once.

"Sure it helps!" he cried, "Now let's go on from here. Great! . . . Here's footprints again. Whoopee! We're on the trail once more. Go back and get that handkerchief, Mark, and come on!"

As they plunged into the forest bent on following wherever the tracks might lead, Don's and Mark's last glimpse of Judge Latham's home was its vicinity being dotted by pairs of scouts, looking high and low.

"If the servants see them they'll probably think they're chasing radio programs or counting clouds!" grinned Don, "There's nothing that looks much funnier than seeing a fellow doing a thing you can't figure out!"

Although nothing more had been seen of Peggy's footprints since their discovery on the path by the bushes, the tell-tale hairpin had added further substantiation to Don's idea that

the Judge's daughter had met with violence. And the fact that the footprints showed evidences of being hurried was also an indication that something more or less compelling had happened to cause the men to leave so suddenly. Don also came upon another interesting fact. The heavier footprints belonged to the same two men for the first quarter of a mile and then one of them had obviously changed off with the third in whatever the two had been carrying, for one pair of footmarks had become lighter and the third pair had grown heavier, moving up opposite the position formerly occupied by the resting member of the trio. This keen-witted deduction brought a volley of praise from Mark, who was amazed at Don's keen perception.

"Boy, you're a wizard!" he complimented Don, "You ought to go into the Canadian Northwest and earn a living with this stuff!"

"Well, I've stalked lots of game up in Michigan," explained Don, unaffectedly, "So I ought'ave picked up a *little.*"

After traversing about a half mile, following the trail by signs of broken branches, overturned stones and pebbles, bent-down plants and footprints where the earth was such as to take their impression, Don and Mark came upon a clinching discovery.

"They've got Peggy all right!" declared Don, excitedly, "See! Her footprint!"

"Gee!" exclaimed Mark, "We're in for it now!"

"I'll say we are! We've got to see this through. She's a game kid! Probably made them carry her as long as she could so's to slow them up. But this proves they haven't hurt her . . . very much, anyway."

"But, hold on here!" interposed the former gang leader, "Those birds are desperate. They're probably armed. We've got to have help!"

Don looked about him. They were on the side of a small hill in a thickly wooded area. No elevation around from which to signal back. And yet Scoutmaster Wheeler needed to be apprised of danger at once!

"The Indian sign!" he cried, "Help me, Mark! We've got to build three fires about fifteen feet apart. Three smokes mean danger. It's a call for help. They'll see it!"

The two set to work speedily and within ten minutes had the fires going with slender wisps of smoke twining skyward.

"Now," said Don, "There's going to be plenty of work for us to do. They'll send help through to these fires by following the smoke but we've got to blaze the trail as we track

from here on. And those trail marks you just got through learning will sure come in handy."

"Yes, if I can remember 'em!" said Mark, "Say, if Rex and Pat could only be here now! If they ever thought there wasn't any kick in scouting!"

"Can't tell, there may be too much of a kick this time!" answered Don, grimly.

Back at camp, Lump Hogan and Bean Rowe lolled around the Observation Tower, taking a roaming look out over the country occasionally. Lolling was something that Lump was especially proficient in, his chubby form being ideally built for such purposes. And Bean, today, was making a most agreeable companion.

"Sure glad Mr. Wheeler picked us for this job!" he remarked.

"You tell the crying fishes!" rejoined Lump, "This tracking may be the berries for guys like Don but I've got no bloodhound blood in me."

"Don's funny," grinned Bean, "He reminds me of a fox terrier that's treed a squirrel and's running around in circles, doing a lot of barking but not getting anywhere."

"Oh, Don's an expert tracker, all right," conceded Lump, "But imagine his cooking up that idea about . . . Hey! . . . What's

that I see? . . . Smoke . . . One . . . two. . . . !"

"*Three* smokes!" finished Bean, jumping up, "Due west . . . about half a mile away . . . toward the Hudson."

"Danger!" mumbled Lump, getting up, lazily, "Now who's idea of a joke is that?"

"Better tell Mr. Wheeler just the same," said Bean, making a megaphone of his hands. But just as Bean was about to call, the Scoutmaster who had been casually scanning the horizon in the opposite direction, swung about and glimpsed the distress signal for himself.

There was nothing humorous to Scoutmaster Wheeler in the sight of a signal cry for help. A scout knew better than to raise the false cry of "Wolf! Wolf!" just to be doing something. Signals of this kind were not to be played with. Here was something that the Scoutmaster *did* take seriously . . . and with a vengeance.

"Bean!" he ordered, "Run to the Mackay home. Get on the phone. Call the police at Redcliffe and all other nearby towns. Also the state constabulary. Have them rush a force here. Notify Judge Latham if he's arrived, that you think something has happened to his daughter. Have him keep in touch with camp. Then round up all the fellows you can and start them toward the smoke. I'm leaving right

away with everybody I can recruit. Stop on your way past the supply tent and tell Ozzie, Rex and Pat to join me at once. Lump, don't leave this lookout post! Here's my field glasses! Keep your eyes open. I'll probably signal instructions!"

And with this battery of commands, Scoutmaster Wheeler set out, forming a hasty company of followers as he ran. Don and Mark, intent on the trail of the abductors could not know it for a certainty, of course, but help was that speedily on the way!

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE TRAIL

Before leaving the scene of the three smokes Don had the presence of mind to write a brief note on a piece of paper and put it between the top two of three rocks, placed atop each other, again signifying danger.

The note read:

PEGGY
THREE MEN
WATCH TRAIL MARKS
DON.

A hundred yards further on the tracks angled sharply to the right and Don had Mark fix his first sign, a small rock atop a larger one and another small rock to the right of it. Don, going ahead, called out directions and the graduate tenderfoot sometimes bending bushes, pointing sticks and using stones, blazed a trail that those following would have no trouble reading.

"Good work!" Don commended, looking back

from time to time, there being few signs that he had to tell the former gang leader.

"Oh, I wouldn't be so bad after a couple of kidnappings!" Mark replied, making grim humor of the situation, "You don't suppose they'll do Peggy any real harm, do you?"

"No telling," answered Don, anxiously, "Remember how she made sport of anything like this happening that afternoon? I felt uneasy then, just from what she told me. I've been reading up on that trial ever since and it looks to me like that bunch are going to be convicted this time. The Stillwell gang's probably desperate. They know some of their ringleaders are going to get it in the neck and rough stuff like this is about their only come-back. They may hold Peggy thinking they can intimidate Judge Latham into letting their men off with light sentences . . . but then again, they may figure they owe the Judge something for past grievances. In that event it's liable to go pretty tough with Peggy."

"Which boils down to this!" summed up Mark, "It's not so healthy to be kidnapped regardless!"

By the time that Bean Rowe had returned to the Observation Tower from having spread the alarm by telephone from the Latham home, most of the scouts had straggled in from their

various two-man tracking expeditions with nothing but tired feet to report.

"Wait till we get hold of Don Rader!" they denounced.

"He should be strung up by the toes until the bottom of his feet are sunburned!" declared Sly, "Sending us all out on a wild mother goose chase."

"Well, *he* apparently found something," pointed out Lump, "See those strings of smoke? . . . You guys are to beat it out to where that smoke is on the double quick. Better hurry! Those fires aren't going to burn forever unless Mr. Wheeler builds 'em when he gets to 'em."

"The police are on the way!" reported Bean, "Judge Latham isn't home yet but the servants said it might just be possible he could be reached getting off the train at Redcliffe . . . so I told the police the train he was expected on and they rushed an officer down to meet it. The police are going to work from both ends. They say if the kidnappers are beating it through the woods, toward the river, they may be able to get to them quicker by staying where they are and going up the river front the minute we send 'em more definite dope as to where they may be located."

"Good stuff!" approved Lump, "There's

more brains in this world than I thought!"

Near a footprint of Peggy's, in a patch of soft earth as the trail again turned, Don came across a curious marking on the ground. He gazed at it a moment, wondering if it could have been accidental, and then, convinced that the marking had been deliberate, cried, exultantly: "What do you know, Mark? Peggy's actually giving us signs!"

This sign in particular was a rectangle with a spot in the center . . . the rectangle obviously having been sketched out hurriedly with the toe of a shoe.

"Danger!" read Mark, "I'll bet she dropped her hairpin to guide whoever might follow, too! Is she using her head? We've probably passed up some other signs she's made!"

"Chances are," nodded Don, "But we're still on her trail, that's the main thing!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler, with eleven scouts, reaching the spot of the three smokes, replenished the fires as a guide for those whom he knew to be following and left the note, as it was, for them to read. He and his party then

hurried on, hoping to be able to overtake Don and Mark before they would encounter the desperate characters they were tracking.

With approximately four and a half miles covered, of an angular course leading toward the river, Don and Mark suddenly came upon a clearing, beyond which lay the Hudson. But the surprise feature of the clearing was a huge old stone house, more resembling a fort than a dwelling. It stood not far from the river on a rise of ground, the approaches to it being steep and forbidding. The house itself was almost completely surrounded by a dense thicket which had sprung up of more recent years during the building's abandonment, for it now gave every sign of decrepitude with the eaves in poor repair, a part of the cornice hanging, and gaping spots in the roof which rose from the stone walls on a slant like an old-fashioned parapet.

"Some mansion in its day!" breathed Don, at first sight.

"What a hangout for a gang!" was Mark's thought.

"From now on we've got to watch our step!" cautioned Don, "Because it's a dead cinch they're not much more than a stone's throw away!"

"The tracks are sure plain enough out there

in the open," observed Mark, "Look! Aren't those some new footprints, coming from the house out to the edge of the clearing here? . . . As if somebody has come to meet the others?"

Don looked closely. "Good eye, Mark!" he agreed, "That's just what happened." Then, after a longer examination. "By jingo!" he exclaimed, involuntarily.

"What's the matter?" asked Mark, seeing that Don was greatly impressed, even shocked, about something.

"Why . . . er . . ." hesitated Don, "Something kind of strange, that's all." The expert tracker drew a deep breath and gazed testily at his companion. "Mark," he continued, "What if you'd find someone you knew among these men?"

The former gang leader laughed at the idea.

"What if," ventured Don, "One of these men should be—your father?"

"You're crazy!" he declared.

"I hope I am," replied Don, earnestly, "But, Mark . . . if you'll notice carefully, the footprints of the man who came out to meet the ones we've been tracking, aren't even. The left foot makes a heavier impression than the right, which is the foot he is favoring. This man is evidently lame."

Mark started and looked at Don queerly. Then, apparently pushing the subject from him, he braced himself and asked, "Well, where do we go from here?"

"I think we ought to reconnoiter a bit and see if we can get up close to the house and make observations," decided Don, "Can't tell how long these birds are going to stay here. Maybe this is just a stopping place. Chances are it is. They'd have to keep traveling with Peggy in order to hold her."

Working their way around, Don and Mark found a place where, under cover of the thicket, they could crawl toward the side of the house without being detected. And then, just as they were about to risk being seen by creeping from the thicket to the house, both of them exclaimed at a discovery.

"An underground passage!"

The entrance to the passage had been cleverly concealed by a cluster of bushes so that the ordinary observer would have passed it by. It was a good thirty feet from the house and faced the river, towering bushes on both sides of the path down to the water, offering a perfect shield.

Don and Mark gazed down into the passage-

way, sniffing at the damp, musty air which came up from it.

"You game?" asked Don, setting his foot inside.

"Listen!" reproved Mark, "I wasn't leader of a gang three years for nothing. Go on in and look out I don't step on your heels!"

Though it was still light outside, with more than an hour of sun remaining, it was dark enough below so that the two scouts were forced to grope their way. They risked lighting matches occasionally and finally knew themselves to be in the rock-walled basement of the house itself, the subterranean passageway widening out into a hall . . . a most peculiar hall for it had only one door opening off it . . . a heavy iron door locked from the inside.

"I see," figured Don, "This door is the guard from any possible entrance like we made. The hall extends on the other side of the door and there's where the rooms are. This is just sort of an entry way that is used for emergency. Say—do you get that smell?"

"I'm just beginning to!" nodded Mark, "Booze!"

"Yes, and plenty of it! Probably stored the other side this door."

"Boy, I'll bet liquor's manufactured here and shipped out by the carload!" whispered Mark.

"Strike another match, will you?" ordered Don, "We've got to get upstairs somehow. That's probably where Peggy . . ."

Mark's match flared up and Don examined the door more closely. No use . . . ! Don's eyes followed from the top down to the floor . . . and there on the floor . . . was he seeing things? Another hair pin!

"We're in luck!" Don told Mark, in hushed tones, excitedly, "Peggy's down here after all! Let's feel out this wall here. We may be able to communicate with her even if we can't get to her!"

Making use of the handle of his knife, Don worked in along the wall, tapping gently, in code.

"Dot! Dash! Dash! Dot! . . . Dot! . . . Dash! Dash! Dot! . . . Dash! Dash! Dot! . . . Dash! Dot! Dash! Dash!" And repeat.

"P-E-G-G-Y!" Don spelled out, and moved on down the narrow, strong smelling passageway. And, finally, near the end, just as another match of Mark's had gone black at his finger tips, came a faint tapping answer from the other side of the wall, almost directly opposite.

"Dot! Dot! Dot! Dot! . . . Dot! . . . Dot! Dash! Dot! . . . Dot!"

"H-E-R-E!" deciphered Don, in a hoarse whisper, and commenced sending again.

The two scouts gazed at one another breathlessly, their faces looking ghastly in the weird, moving shadows of match light.

"D-O-N . . . H-E-L-P . . . C-O-M-I-N-G!" hammered Don, cautiously, and waited to see if Peggy had gotten it.

He grinned nervously as, after a moment's pause, there came her answer, "Dot! Dash! Dot!" meaning, "Received!"

Peggy then commenced sending, slowly, surely, evidently having remembered Don's "Q.R.S." when they had matched wits upon the sun porch at home.

"D-U-S-K," spelled Don, ear against the wall, "Here comes some more . . . R-I-V-E-R! . . . Something else . . . B-O-A-T!"

"Gee! They're going to beat it with her!" cried Mark, keeping his voice low, "*Dusk!* We haven't much time!"

"I'll say not!" rejoined Don, "Sure hope the fellows picked up our smoke signals!"

He tapped out "Dot! Dash! Dot!" to reassure Peggy that her message had been received. But there was no time for more. A light ap-

peared at the other end of the passageway and Don and Mark, crouching down, realized that, if whoever was coming did not stop at the iron door, they were trapped! An uncomfortable position indeed for the two scouts!

CHAPTER XVII

PERILOUS MOMENTS

As soon as Scoutmaster Wheeler arrived at the clearing and located what was obviously the stronghold of the gang abducting Peggy, he sent two scouts running to climb the highest hill within quick reaching distance and dispatch word to those at the camp site. The Scoutmaster wrote the message he wished sent on the back of an envelope. It was:

TWO MILES ABOVE REDCLIFFE STONE HOUSE WILD COUNTRY HAVE ESTABLISHED CORDON RUSH ARMED ASSISTANCE

The idea of surrounding the house with scouts, stalking the enemy as it were, was more for the purpose of keeping watch and making a record of movements so that the authorities, coming upon the scene could be quickly acquainted with all developments and act accordingly.

"Take no needless chances," Scoutmaster Wheeler warned his boys, "We're dealing with

desperate men who probably won't hesitate to shoot. But don't let anything they do escape your attention."

And so, eleven pairs of eyes, from different vantage points, centered upon the old stone house, Ozzie, Rex and Pat taking their station down near the river, just off the path that led from the thicket to the shore. Reinforcements arrived shortly after, led by Bean Rowe, these fellows being sent out to strengthen the cordon. And a spirit of excitement and adventure prevailed beyond that which any member of Troop 36 had experienced before.

"We're up against the famous Stillwell gang!" they told themselves and rubbed their eyes and pinched their arms and then, realizing that the sensation they were feeling was an actual fact, half of them wondered why their knees commenced to wabble.

"But where's Don and Mark?" asked someone.

Ah! That was something everyone wanted to know and no one could answer. That they were somewhere in the vicinity was certain but whether they had been captured or whether they were in hiding, doing some venturing of their own, was an open question.

"They're foolish if they went after Peggy on their own hook," declared Scoutmaster

Wheeler, "They could easily get bumped off for their trouble. And the way we've got the place surrounded now . . . well, I'd like to see anyone break through!"

Pushed back against the dead end of the passageway, Don and Mark, hearts throbbing, heard disturbed voices.

"Scouts? Ha! Ha! Ha! You're drunk!"

"I tell you I saw one out by the bushes. . . . !"

"Yeah?"

"And that ain't all! I spotted something move behind a tree on the north side."

"Well, what d'ya s'pose they're doin' around here? . . . D'ya figure they're wise to us?"

"Wise! . . . No—but they're just dumb enough to be picking daisies under hornets' nests!"

Don nudged Mark. Trop 36 was at hand. And such a way for them to be hearing about it—from the desperadoes themselves! Evidently the lack of respect which the gangsters had had for Boy Scouts was improving.

A light flashed into the corner.

"Well, what the . . . !" bellowed a surprised voice, "If *here* ain't a couple! These Scouts is thicker than ants!"

"Come out of there!" roared a second, and one of the toughs whom Don had seen that day near camp, stepped up, covering the boys with a gun.

"Whatcha doin' here?" demanded a third.

It was a ticklish moment for Don and Mark but Don, using his wits, saved them possible serious trouble.

"We—we were just looking around," he answered, playing up to the gangsters' belief that the Scouts were unaware of the kidnapping.

The toughs laughed harshly.

"Lookin' around, eh? . . . Runnin' over other people's property! . . . Well, you've looked in the wrong place this time! . . . Tom, you and Louie take 'em upstairs. You know what to do with 'em!"

Tom, the fourth member of the gang, the one whom Don had described from footprints as being lame, limped forward. And, as he came out of the shadows so that he could get a good glimpse of the scouts and they of him, Tom started and stared. Mark did likewise, biting his lip to keep from exclaiming out loud.

What passed through the minds of father and son at that moment of stabbing recognition will probably never be known but it is a matter of record that each, so far as the others were

concerned, steeled himself and gave no outward hint of ever having met before.

"Get a move on, you!" Mr. Whipple ordered gruffly, pulling Mark from the corner and pushing him down the passageway. His breath smelled of liquor but this time Don noted he was not intoxicated. Perhaps the events of the day had been too sobering.

"That's right, step lively!" snapped the man referred to as Louie, urging Don along at the point of a gun, "We ain't got much time to monkey with you!"

Jim, the apparent leader of the four, a long, gangling type of man with a red face, unlocked the heavy iron door and swung it slowly back to let his two comrades through with their prisoners.

"Tie 'em up good!" he cautioned, "And gag 'em!"

"That's easy!" grinned Louie, "They brung ropes and blow rags along just for that purpose! Didn't you, boys?" And he laughed heartily at his own joke.

"Get back here right away!" the leader called after, "We gotta be moving!"

Don and Mark saw no particular humor in being gagged and bound, especially when they were so well aware that every second was going

to count in apprehending the kidnappers. In some manner one or the other of them must have to get free and get word out to fellow scouts. They must not fail! If the gangsters were able to reach the river with Peggy, under cover of darkness it would be next to impossible to trail them. And anything might happen after that. The river led to the sea and the sea was an open sesame to all the mysterious ports of the world. A fast launch, connecting with a rum running ship somewhere in the dusk and fog of New York harbor . . . and Peggy, if this was the gangsters design, could be lost forever . . . swallowed up as though the waters had closed over her head.

Mr. Whipple led the way past the underground room in which the scouts knew Peggy to be confined. He forced them, then, up a narrow stairway to the first floor, and into a spacious front room which contained a massive old fireplace and large, old-fashioned windows, barricaded with heavy shutters.

Louie immediately took charge of frisking the scouts, getting considerable fun out of the things Don and Mark carried. He tested their knives with his finger and whistled at their sharpness.

"Don't you little boys know you might get cut with these?" he taunted, handing them to

the man known as Tom. "All right! Let's have them clothes lines around your waist and them pretty colored handerchiefs. Now lie down here on the floor and, if you're real good, maybe I'll tell you a bedtime story!"

Louie jollied as he worked, tying Don's and Mark's hands behind them in a fashion which told the two scouts that he knew what he was doing. Their feet were bound likewise and then Louie, forcing their mouths open, inserted the knotted neckerchiefs, tying them tightly.

"I hate to do this, honest I do!" he apologized, "But we're going to be very busy tonight, boys . . . and if you can't keep from stickin' your noses into other folks's business you got to expect trouble."

Crack!

Louie started, glancing warily at Tom. The report was unmistakably a gun shot.

"For ——— sake!" cursed Louie, running for the door, "Come on, Tom!"

Crack! . . . Crack! . . . Crack! Crack!

From the hall came shouts of the other two gangsters, as they pounded up the stairs.

"Police!" cried Jim, "State troopers! . . . We're surrounded! . . . Where are you guys? . . . Andy's just come with the boat! . . . Pick a window and give 'em

hell! . . . Soon's it's dark we'll make a break for it!"

It was a wildly exciting moment with all concerned being placed at once under high pressure. But the gangster father of a Tenderfoot Scout made suprising use of that moment to return to his son's side the knife which had been taken from him! He then rushed limpingly from the room to permit a frenzied Louie to slam shut and bar the door!

Outside, advancing cautiously, a line of soldiers, their rifles spatting, approached the stone house from three sides. Their advance was supported by a police squad in charge of the Redcliffe chief. Back, out of range, in company with Scoutmaster Wheeler, a white-haired man stood, grim-jawed. Behind them, in a widened circle, the members of Troop 36 were scattered, ambushed as the last line of defense. Desperate measures were being taken against a notoriously desperate foe.

"Stillwell gangsters always fight to the death," had become an almost traditional phrase, which apparently was to be borne out again for the police chief, in going boldly up to the house and shouting in for its occupants to surrender the girl as well as themselves, was greeted instead by a warning pistol shot. The

DON HELD TWO HANDKERCHIEFS PREPARING TO SIGNAL WITH TWO-ARM, SEMAPHORE CODE.

Don Rader, Trail Blazer.

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state troopers opened fire, then, without any further ado, and the battle was on!

Don and Mark lost no time starting to work in the effort to free themselves from their bonds. Mark, the instant the door was closed, rolled over and groped with his fingers until he had clutched the handle of his knife. Then, rolling over again, he placed his back to Don's and Don, feeling about, finally got the knife's blade between his two wrists, sawing it up and down on the tightly drawn rope. As he labored several bullets crashed through the heavy shutters, sounding ping! as they whizzed through the glass, leaving little jagged holes, the slugs imbedding themselves in the wall. If the Scouts had been anywhere else but on the floor they might have been hit.

The cutting of Don's bonds took five minutes, after which the rest was easily and swiftly accomplished. Don then released Mark, the two of them remaining on the floor, listening to the fusillade of shots.

"How we going to get out of here?" asked Mark, his throat dry and palpitating.

"Don't know yet," said Don, crawling on hands and knees toward the door, "Mighty white of your Dad, giving us a chance like this. You know what I think, Mark . . . ?"

"What?"

"Your Dad's sick and tired of this business. But he's gotten in so deep he don't see how he can get out."

"Funny," said Mark, "That's just what I was thinking . . . if Dad could somehow . . ."

Curses outside the door. Jim raving about a bullet wound in the shoulder!

"We'll fix his girl for this!"

"Don't look like we can get out of here!" moaned Don, "The door's too strong and we'd get shot trying to get out the windows. But if I could only get some place where I could even signal . . . and tell them of the secret passage . . . !"

"How about the roof?" suggested Mark.

"Great!" cried Don, doubtfully, "But how . . ."

"Through the chimney!"

Here was an idea! Don crawled over to the old fireplace and looked up it. It had been built of rough stones so that there were many blackened crevices to which toes and fingers might cling. As he and Mark were inspecting the chimney a bullet chipped a stone in the mantel piece, directly over their heads.

"Close shave!" grinned Mark, "The quicker we get up that chimney, the better!"

It was a hard, risky climb with both scouts

feeling for the next hold up overhead and black flakes of soot falling in their faces. But they made it, swinging up over the edge and hanging on a moment, gasping for breath.

"Phooey!" said Mark, and spit out lumps of black.

The scene from the roof was one to be remembered. They were far above the line of fire and were able to take in, at a glance, the plan of battle on the ground. Troopers, having worked half way up the rise, had been driven back due to the chilling presence of a machine gun which had been swung into action by the four defenders as a last resort. Its peppering fire in the hands of Louie had dropped two troopers with leg wounds, causing every attacker to seek temporary shelter from its murderous "rat-a-tat-tat!"

Don, stepping to the edge of the roof, in full view, held aloft two handkerchiefs for "Attention," preparing to signal with Two-arm Semaphore Code.

It was commencing to grow dusk and Don knew that his message must be put over quickly.

"There's Ozzie and Rex and Pat!" cried Mark, pointing, "They see you! They're on the right side of the house, too . . . the gang's got to pass 'em to get to the river . . . Oh, boy!"

Don's arms flashed.

"What do you know?" shouted Rex, punching Pat excitedly, as he stared up at the signaling figure on the roof, "I haven't missed a letter yet!"

"W-A-T-C-H . . . B-R-E-A-K . . . F-O-R . . . R-I-V-E-R . . . A-T . . . D-A-R-K . . . S-E-C-R-E-T . . . P-A-S-S-A-G-E . . . T-O . . . H-O-U-S-E . . . I-N . . . B-U-S-H-E-S"

Don waited a moment until certain that his whole message had been received. Ozzie's neckerchiefs waved.

"Hey!" thought Mark, grabbing Don's arm, "For Pete's sake, tell 'em to be careful! If they get set for the gang and open fire when they come out, they might shoot Peggy!"

"Gee!" exclaimed Don, perspiration showing on his forehead, "Why didn't I think of that?"

He fluttered his neckerchiefs frantically, signaling, "V. I. . . . V. I."

"Very important!" cried Rex, "Boy, I'm getting good. Some reader!"

And now the message!

"T-E-L-L . . . A-L-L . . . H-O-L-D . . . F-I-R-E . . . T-H-E-Y . . . M-A-Y . . . U-S-E . . . P-E-G-G-Y . . . F-O-R . . . S-H-I-E-L-D"

Things took place quickly enough on the

ground after that and Don and Mark, looking down, laughed as they saw Rex and Pat stretching a rope across the path under Ozzie's supervision.

"It's an old trick but it may work," said Don.

Just as Mark had surmised, when the break was made in the gathering darkness, the first person to be seen was the unwilling figure of a girl, held in the vice-like grip of a man who kept her in front of him, two of his companions crouching cautiously behind, guns drawn. The "rat-a-tat-tat" of the machine gun was still sounding, it evidently having been decided to leave one of their number behind a few moments as a blind.

"Dad's not with 'em," said Mark, breathlessly, "I'm glad of it."

The trio, pushing Peggy ahead of them, ran down the path hidden by bushes on both sides. As they were about at the end of it, Peggy was seen to trip and fall heavily. The gangsters, bunched closely behind, went down in a heap and then the forms of Ozzie, Rex and Pat were seen to leap in. They were quickly followed by police, the tangle being so wild for the first few minutes that Don and Mark could scarcely follow it even though they had what Mark

afterwards referred to as "grandstand seats." Don, keeping anxious eyes out for Peggy, did see her dragged free from the melee, however, Ozzie flinging her to one side. There were several revolver shots as guns were wrenched away from the gangsters while, out on the river, the sound of a motor boat's racing engine told the story of a fleeing accomplice.

Mark's first thought, after witnessing the capture of three more members of the Stillwell gang, was concerning his father, and he and Don, after breaking through a window, hurriedly found their way downstairs, encountering Mr. Whipple, pale and trembling from his ordeal, standing in the center of a bullet riddled room. His arm was bleeding profusedly from a wound and Don quickly made a tourniquet to check the flood of blood. Then, Mr. Whipple, on the verge of a nervous collapse, fell forward into Mark's arms.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN

The surprise witness, introduced by the state on the last day for the presentation of evidence in the trial against leading members of the Stillwell gang, resulted in convictions for all. Mr. Thomas Whipple, telling his story on the stand, narrated how, when penniless, he had resorted to the selling of bootleg whiskey supplied him by the gang, and that under the pressure exerted by his dealing in this traffic, had been forced into more and more odious jobs, being threatened with death if he refused.

The courage of Mr. Whipple in turning state's evidence to drive the final nail in ridding the country of one of the most vicious and powerfully organized gangs, was given high editorial comment by leading papers and magazines as well as made the subject for church sermons. And, at last, Mr. Whipple through employment with a wholesale house, was enabled to make the climb back to respectability and happiness.

One day, late in the summer, two familiar

visitors called upon Scoutmaster Ed Wheeler.

"Mr. Wheeler," said one, "We haven't yet been able to do anything that we feel distinctly worthwhile for those two splendid boys—Don Rader and Mark Whipple. So we're coming to you for advice. What would you suggest? . . . Can we put them through college?"

Scoutmaster Wheeler shook his head.

"I'm afraid not . . . not unless you want to pauperize them. They're very well able to take care of themselves."

"Confound it," declared the white-haired gentleman, somewhat impatiently, "Why are worthwhile people usually so independent? . . . You know, Mr. Wheeler, money's no object with us. And what we both want is to do something real . . . something lasting . . . something to be remembered . . . either for these boys or in their name. Now, *can* you, or *will* you, give us a hint?"

Scoutmaster Wheeler looked off into space.

"There are many fine things yet to be done, Judge Latham. I . . . I'd rather be excused, sir, from mentioning anything specific as it might be misconstrued as a personal desire."

Judge Latham and Mr. Mackay looked their dismay.

"Defeated wherever we go!" said Mr. Mackay, "We've exhausted our friends, our enemies and ourselves on this problem . . . and we're no nearer the solution now than in the beginning . . . that is . . . unless . . ."

And here Mr. Mackay glanced guardedly at his friend, the Judge.

". . . unless," took up the Judge, "We could make Don and Mark a gift of the camp site they liked so well . . . those ninety acres through there . . . but we suppose that would be prohibited, too!"

Scoutmaster Wheeler looked his profound astonishment.

"Why, gentlemen! That's magnificent! . . . But why spoil the spirit and intent of the gift by making it just to Don and Mark? They'll have derived the benefit and inspiration of it in several years and will then have passed on to make room for other fellows. If you want to do them lasting honor, may I suggest now, that you make this gift in the name of these boys of our Troop, to the Manhattan Council for the use of all the Troops in the City of New York!"

"Now there's a whale of an idea!" declared Mr. Mackay, enthusiastically, "I told you,

Judge, if we stuck to this thing long enough we'd finally hit it!"

"Of course you realize, gentlemen," cautioned the Scoutmaster, "That a gift like that would be far too big for any little local troop to begin to handle. The upkeep alone would be terrific. Why, an estate of that size would take a trust fund of easily twenty-five thousand dollars to pay its upkeep."

"Well," replied Judge Latham, with a wink at his friend the architect, "I guess we won't stop in the middle of our Good Turn, will we? . . . It was our intention to foot the bill for everything that was needed to build one of the best and biggest camps for boys in America!"

"It would be, sir!" enthused Scoutmaster Wheeler, "I know of no more wonderful site for it. Why, it takes my breath away to think of it! . . . There wouldn't be anything since the Rockefellow Foundation to equal a gift like this! My, I can see it now—with its colony of buildings . . . its huge mess hall . . . its many cabins . . . its reception hall, hospital, boathouse, winter camp site, yes —and its Scoutmaster's building!"

"Hold on, there!" stopped Mr. Mackay, "Or you'll have Judge and me so worked up we'll be breaking the earth for it tomorrow!"

"Could you arrange for us to meet the Manhattan Council and discuss with them as to whether they would be willing and desirous of taking this estate over?" asked Judge Latham.

"I certainly can," assured Scoutmaster Wheeler, "And I shall consider it a great honor and privilege. As for the boys! . . . Gentlemen, I'm going to let you break this to 'em yourselves . . . and it wouldn't surprise me if you get the value of the gift back right then, with interest, from the looks on their faces."

And Scoutmaster Wheeler's prophecy was more than fulfilled.

There came a day, around the middle of September, when the scouts of Troop 36 journeyed out once more to the place in God's great out-of-doors which was to become their permanent camp site. It was a gala day, in a sense, for honors were to be presented to certain deserving scouts and several important ceremonies were to be held. Because of the nature of the occasion, parents were especially invited and automobiles provided to transport all who cared to make the trip. A large crowd of friends and relatives of the boys was, therefore, in attendance.

Notable, among a group of notables, was the presence of the members of the Manhattan Council, one member, the Park Commissioner of Westchester County, another a leading physician, another the superintendent of schools, another a nationally famous athletic director and so on through a list of titles held only by worthy men. These gentlemen visiting this splendid estate which was to be formally presented to them through Troop 36, having already been pledged by its donors to be equipped and ready for official turning over to the Boy Scouts of the City of New York on July 1st of the following year.

There was also present the radiantly happy form of a girl who insisted on sitting in the front row where she could have an uninterrupted view during the time that Don was to receive his Eagle.

And she listened intently, with eyes that smarted a bit, at the things Scoutmaster Wheeler said of him . . . "I know you don't like people to fuss around about the kind of a hero you are. I know you just look upon yourself as having been especially privileged in the services you have rendered in saving life. But, at the same time, without trying to flatter you, I feel that I have a right to publicly con-

gratulate you for several nice pieces of work you have turned in . . . the sort of work that not only reflects credit upon yourself but adds immeasureably to the great name of Scouting, emphasizing, as it does, the value of proper training . . . such training to be acquired through living the Scout Motto, "Be Prepared!"

A murmur of surprise in the audience then, for Scoutmaster Wheeler had nodded to the radiant-faced girl in the front row and she had stepped proudly up on the platform to take in fingers which trembled, ever so little, a badge, the winning of which meant more to a Scout than all other honors.

Scout Don Rader stood very still and at attention as Peggy Latham, the girl whom he had rescued from drowning, pinned the Eagle badge in place, giving it a little admiring pat as she finished, and extended her left hand, sharing with Don, the Scout handshake.

Applause once more for another who deserved the title of hero and who was to receive distinction as a Second Class Scout—the former leader of a gang which now no longer existed as such for the simple reason that most of its members were working toward the organization of a new Scout Troop!

"In Scout Whipple," said Scoutmaster Wheeler, "We had a fellow who came into Scouting with the other fellows taking the "Show me!" attitude. He was supposed to be tough and, believe me, he was! He was a tough fellow not to get along with; the harder you tried not to like him the more you had to; he minded his own business and took Scouting so seriously that he almost tore the Handbook to pieces when he read that you couldn't go from Tenderfoot to First Class Scout in over night. I doubt if we ever had a fellow in the Troop who's worked any harder or quieter or more earnestly to do what he could for others or for himself. And so it's a great pleasure to welcome Mark Whipple as a Second Class Scout."

Scoutmaster Whipple paused a moment. Then, addressing the audience, he explained, simply: "It is the custom in this Troop for the father of the boy receiving this honor to pin the badge on his son. Mr. Whipple, will you come forward, please?"

A slight hesitation and then the figure of a man, rising and feeling his way past folks seated on crude wooden benches in the light of the camp fire! A limping, self-conscious stride as he reached the aisle, carpeted in grass. A wave of feeling as folks saw the scout on the

platform, watching that stride every foot of the way . . . a journey which, to the marcher, seemed miles. A fumbling moment when the father took the badge from the scoutmaster and turned toward his son. And then a sudden dryness in throats as the son, never taking his eyes from his father, watched him pin the badge on, standing shoulders back, face a bit flushed, with a little smile twisting at the corners of his mouth as though he was saying, "Aw, gee, Dad, I didn't think this was going to be so tough on you . . . coming up here before all these people . . . just for *me!*" A look of comradeship and affection . . . and understanding . . . passing between, expressing more than feeble words could ever say. And a little woman, as father and son clasped hands, sitting so that her face was beyond the flicker of the fire, bowing her head and crying softly. Ozzie, Rex and Pat, now restored to good graces, congratulating Second Class Scout Whipple, on his leaving the platform. And then, the closing of a meeting which would live forever in the mind and heart of every scout present and every person in that audience who sensed what Scouting meant to the boys in Troop 36 . . . or in any troop, for that matter.

A voice, starting taps, with all standing reverently, under the stars, and joining in the words:

Day is done,
Gone the sun,
From the sky,
From the lake
From the hill
All is well,
Safely rest,
God is nigh!

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